GOD INSIDE OUT

An in-depth study of the Holy Spirit

SIMON PONSONBY

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Simon Ponsonby is in my view one of Britain's finest Christian communicators: he is thoughtful, insightful and passionate. Get ready to be inspired and challenged to go deeper with God.

Amy Orr-Ewing
European Director of Training,
Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

For a church that seems to insist on separating the work of theology and the person of the Holy Spirit, *God Inside Out* is a much needed response. Simon's logic is enviable, but for all that he is as passionate as someone in the first flush of charismatic enthusiasm.

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Senior Pastor, Millmead Centre

This is a masterly and wide-ranging study of one of the most vital doctrines for the Church today – mind-stretching, heart-warming and faith-challenging. An immensely readable piece of serious theology at a time when there is so much muddled thinking about the Spirit.

Canon David MacInnes
Former Rector of St Aldate's and university missioner

Simon is a most gifted theological communicator. He thinks with rich understanding and writes with piercing clarity. This book gives great handles enabling us to wrangle with and grasp the vast subject of the Holy Spirit. And as a close friend, I can tell you his writing is consistent with his Spirit-filled living.

Joseph Steinberg
CMS Director and author of The Y Course

Writing from a Charismatic perspective Simon Ponsonby maintains the emphases of the Bible's teaching, stressing the intimate relationship of the Spirit with God's Word and his work of salvation through Christ. Many of the differences between Evangelical Christians would be kept in perspective if we all followed his example of faithful and passionate engagement with Scripture.

Vaughan Roberts
Rector, St Ebbe's, Oxford

Simon has both an informed mind and a warmed heart, and he has drunk deeply of the God who satisfies. Reading this book will provoke thirst, thinking and theology! It is a rare read in an age in which there is no end of the writing of books. Here, at last, is one which is essential to read and think about. Read it and grow!

Canon David White
Diocesan Missioner Cornwall & Rector of St Austell parish

Simon Ponsonby is one of those rare men who, without contradiction, has wedded a keen intellect to a simple faith in Christ, and thus is able to stand with his feet firmly planted in the twenty-first century, while hungering in his heart for union with Christ.

Eliot Tepper
International Director of Betel Ministries

Simon is zealous for the Truth! I have seldom met anyone who is so passionate about digging to find every nugget hidden in the Word. As a 'Spirit' man, this makes him fascinating to listen to and read. He has that rare combination of being such a pastor, and such a strong communicator of truth, and able to prepare the word in such an easily accessible form. Come to the Banquet!

Gordon Hickson
Parish Vicar, St Aldate's Oxford

Not only is Simon a man passionate about people, people who are sleepwalking away from God and Christians who live in mediocrity, but he is also a man who is passionate about God's word and how we can effectively make sense of it in and for our generation, in the light of those who have gone before.

Revd Lis Goddard
Tutor in Ministerial Formation, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

Simon is what we would call a 'people's theologian'. Someone once said 'to communicate something simply, you have to understand it profoundly', and Simon thoroughly fulfils that in his excellent teaching.

John and Debby Wright
Senior Pastors, Trent Vineyard, Nottingham

Simon is a perfect combination of head and heart working together. He will amaze you with his knowledge and understanding and then challenge you with his humour and insight. This book will be deep and wide because that is who Simon is – a man who digs deep and finds treasure and then stretches wide, makes you laugh and gives you many practical answers to life!

Rachel Hickson
Founder of Heartcry Ministries, London Prayernet

It is rare to 'click' with someone heart, mind, and spirit. . . . This book reads like an evening with Simon – engaging, thoughtful, devotional and informed. The man, and his book, are highly recommended!

Dr Guy Chevreau
Author of Catch the Fire

This is simply the best contemporary book on the person and work of the Holy Spirit of which I am aware. Simon's style of writing is accessible and easy to understand, but his topic and his content are both deep and rich. Here is a masterful communicator addressing the third person of the Godhead in a way that will inform, challenge, comfort, and inspire.

Revd Dr Bill Johnson
Professor of Philosophy, Husson University;
Senior Pastor of Pittsfield First Baptist Church, Pittsfield, Maine

God Inside Out

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Lyrics from 'Cousin Jack' by Show of Hands.
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PREFACE – INSIDE THE VEIN

Last Pentecost I was invited by my dear friend David White to speak at a weekend conference on the Holy Spirit at his thriving church in Cornwall. We both share a love of folk music, and as it happened, my favourite folk band, Show of Hands, were playing just a mile away on the evening before the conference. We all joined in singing along to their classic song about a Cornish miner, 'Cousin Jack'. Set in the mid-eighteenth century, the lyrics are profoundly moving, speaking of John Wesley giving the miners a voice, and of the miners being sustained underground by visions of heaven. The chorus goes:

Where there's a mine or a hole in the ground,
That's where I'm heading for that's where I'm bound
Look for me under the lode or inside the vein.

In many respects, the doctrine of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – that valuable ore, that beautiful vein, that precious divine deposit – has somehow been buried under years of Church tradition and theological debate. That Pentecost weekend, as I sought to teach those Cornish Christians about the Spirit, I felt rather like that Cornish miner working away under the lode, inside the vein.

This book is my mining of that golden vein of the third Person in the Trinity. It began life as a series of lectures given at the St Aldates School of Theology. Within the limits of my ability, it attempts to be a comprehensive summary of the Person and Work of the Spirit. Framed by three criteria: *Biblical*, *Theological* and *Practical*.

First, *biblical* – sacred, inspired Scripture is the source and norm for all our reflection on God. It is in this repository of revelation that we meet God in his saving history. I have therefore sought to present what the Bible says,

as I understand it, on any subject which the Spirit touches. The book's text has several hundred biblical references, not all written out, and my hope is that it will be read and tested by its readers with Bible in hand.

Second, *theological* – almost two millennia have passed since the New Testament was written, and another millennium-plus since the oral traditions and earliest Old Testament materials were initially collated. There has been reflection on these texts and truths across the length and breadth of the Church. To ignore this reflection and think we may come to a text in splendid isolation without thought and respect for the voice of our Christian forefathers would be ignorant and arrogant. Throughout this book, I draw frequent comment from the Church Fathers, reformers, and modern theologians. To cite a scholar is not to say I always stand with that scholar, but it is important to form one's position in the context of respectful listening. Theology is 'speech about God' (*theo* meaning God and *logos* meaning speech), and I have sought to have something clear to say by attempting to systematically draw together the various threads in this elusive subject and hold them within a defined, articulate whole.

Third, *practical* – the Puritan divine William Ames said that 'Theology is the doctrine of living to God'. This is a study in pneumatology (from the Greek: *pneuma*, meaning Spirit, and *logos*, meaning speech). Therefore pneumatology is the study of the humanward operation of God. The Spirit is God with us, working in and through us, his Church, shaping us into the character of Christ, equipping us in service to Christ and the world. At times I have suggested how I see this operating – whatever those particulars, we must realise that the Spirit is not an intellectual study but always has an existential and external impulse. *Biblical*, *Theological*, *Practical*. No doubt, depending on their own spiritual commitments, some readers may find I haven't been biblical, or theological, or practical enough for them.

Several guides have accompanied me in this writing. The Puritan John Owen has repeatedly moved me through his combination of warm love for Christ, depth in the word and systematic theological grasp. The two volumes on the Holy Spirit by Stanley Burgess in the *Holy Spirit* series have proved invaluable. Like a mountaineer pioneering a route, belaying for those coming up after, Burgess has read and recorded an encyclopaedic account of the treatment of the Spirit throughout the traditions. I have attempted to indicate wherever I have drawn on scholars and their books – I

recognise that sometimes one thinks a thought or sentence is one's own, only to realise subsequently one had read it elsewhere! This book's style and structure show it is not written for the academic. However I would be delighted if it may hint at directions that young scholars may pursue more rigorously and fruitfully. Though not academic, it isn't an easy quick read for the beach or airplane – it probably needs to be read slowly, a chapter at a time, in the bath with a cup of tea.

I want to thank the students who attended St Aldates School of Theology and even appeared to enjoy it. Their critical questions and comments helped me further mine this doctrine's riches. I am profoundly grateful to Charlie and Anita Cleverly and the leadership of St Aldates for appointing me to this privileged role as Pastor of Theology, and for those who have financed and supervised the project. John Lowe, an Oxford classicist, deserves special mention as my research assistant, who helped locate material, discuss topics and run the events. Mark Porter, an Oxford music graduate, has given invaluable assistance in formatting the lectures into book form and passing his keen theological mind over the material as well as compiling the scripture index. I am grateful for the critical constructive comments from theologians Dr Robert Forrest and Dr Ian Stackhouse. My dear father painstakingly read it in early draft and checked every reference, encouraging and nuancing where appropriate. My wife Tiffany is a model of the Spirit-filled life. I dedicate this book to her.

PART ONE

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD

1

THE DIVINITY AND PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT

Introduction

The night before I began work on this book I was reading John Hunt's classic account of the first successful Everest expedition, of which he was leader. Moved by the whole event, I half prayed, half wished I could have the opportunity to attempt something as exciting and exacting. Immediately I was reminded of the next day's planned project. Truly, attempting to write a comprehensive study, which is accessible, biblical, theological, historical and practical, on the Person and Work of the Spirit, feels like climbing the Everest of Christian belief.

Immediately, one is confronted by a mountain of texts, a sheer proliferation of references to the Spirit in Scripture, some three hundred in the New Testament alone, the diversification of which touches every aspect or sub-sect of theology. Despite, or perhaps because of this, he remains elusive though not evasive. Metaphors are martialled to help us understand him: *wind*, *water*, *oil*, *fire*, *a dove* – which, though they may articulate our experience of him, are all kinetic in nature, and point to his dynamic divinity that may not be contained or constrained. This multiplicity and multiformity of terms, types and titles militate against us easily comprehending him. Alasdair Heron called the Holy Spirit 'the most elusive and difficult of all themes in Christian theology'.[1] Puritan genius John Owen, who wrote two massive volumes on the Spirit, said as he set out to write on this theme, that he found it, 'a work too great and difficult for me to undertake and beyond my ability to manage to the glory of God, or the good of men, for who is sufficient for these things'.[2]

Our frustration in articulation has been a general feature of every period of the Church. The best the fourth-century councils of Nicaea could come up with in their formularies was: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit', later expanded to, 'The Lord, the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets'. Not bad, but not enough.

The third Person of the Trinity is the third article in the creeds, and sadly often ranked third in theology. Yet, as we shall see, 'from the stand-point of experience, the Spirit is first'.[3] Indeed, notably in the early Orthodox tradition, late fourth-century prayers like the Trisagion (meaning 'thrice holy'), which undoubtedly reflect earlier devotions, are unapologetic in praying to, invoking and worshipping the tri-personal God. The Spirit was clearly regarded as central to worship very early on. It was only when the deity of the Spirit and the Son, who were worshipped, was placed under threat by errant theology, that the creeds were formulated to reassert the Church's belief. The doctrine of the Church did not arise at the councils and with the creeds, but was represented and firmly established by ecumenical councils. Theology articulated spirituality and worship, not vice versa.

Nevertheless, in the fourth century Gregory of Nazianzus called the Spirit *Theos Agraptos*, the God who nobody writes about. Theologians have described him as 'the Cinderella of theology', 'the orphan doctrine of theology', the 'dark side of the moon in Christian theology', and 'the stealth weapon of the Church'. Occasional bonfires lighting up the dimness in Spirit theology have been lit; perhaps we could mention Calvin who was titled the 'theologian of the spirit', or more notably the Puritan John Owen. But tellingly he said that, in writing his classic text on the Spirit: 'I had not the advantage of any one author, ancient or modern, to beat the path before me.'[4]

Before he died in the early 1960s, the great theologian Karl Barth wrote of a dream he was beginning to express in various contexts, that someone, or perhaps a whole age, 'might develop a theology of the Holy Spirit which now I can only envisage from afar as Moses once looked on the promised land'.[5]

To some extent his hope and dream has been fulfilled and there has been a proliferation of works in the last forty years on the Spirit, notably coming out of the Pentecostal tradition and the charismatic movements, both of which claim to be movements of the Spirit, and which have seen

remarkable growth in terms of the number of followers. Much of the voluminous material drawn from these movements tends to be at the 'personal, pastoral' level, articulating experiences of the Spirit and 'revelations from the Spirit', with rather more work needed at the theological level.

But the emphasis on 'testimony' is itself theological. It points us to a profound truth about the Spirit, that he is always the God we experience, the God who encounters us. Like Christ, he also is Emmanuel, God with us. Ontological categories concerning his eternal being, divine essence and trinitarian relations are vital, but it is the Spirit, who stoops and stays and speaks and brings salvation to us, with whom we have to do. Consequently, in renewal circles, the more conceptual and theological discussions have often taken a back seat to the experiential or experimental. Both are right and necessary.

In this book we shall be exploring the biblical witness to the Person and Work of the Spirit, reflecting respectfully on Church tradition, seeking to fashion a clear framework for our comprehension and articulation of the Spirit who is Lord. At the same time we want to open our hearts to accommodate the Spirit as divine Love raining on our arid souls (Romans 5:5); to allow the breath of God to vivify our listless state (Ezekiel 37); to allow the river of God to satiate our thirsting searching emptiness (John 4:10f).

To grasp the Spirit or be grasped by him, we must engage our minds to understand the Mind who ordered the universe, who spoke to the prophets and still speaks through his Scriptures. But we must also, deep within, be inviting and invoking this breath of God – loving God, seeking God with our hearts as well as our minds. With God, *learning without love is not learning*. *Love without learning is not love*. The more we learn of him the more we will love him. The more we love him, the more we will want to learn of him.

Doxology has always been the test of theology. Right worship shows right theology, right theology leads to right worship. The best theology is itself an act of worship. If adoration and consecration are not the net result of our theological studies, either what we have studied is flawed, or we ourselves are blinded. *Doing theology is stretching our minds to comprehend God's word, from a place of prayer and desire.* As we study, let us pray the first stanza of that ancient, universally accorded hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*:

Come Creator Spirit
visit the minds of those who are yours
fill with heavenly grace
the hearts that you have made

The Holy Spirit is the third person within the one God

Whenever and wherever the Church has faltered in her understanding and relating to the Spirit, it is because one of two errors have been held. The first is when the Spirit is *granted personality but denied divinity*; regarded as a less-than-divine agent, a created being, perhaps even supreme among created beings, but nevertheless subordinate to God, marching to the beat of his superiors. The second is when the Spirit is *granted divinity but denied personality*; regarded as God in his action humanward in the mode of Spirit, an energy emitted, but not a distinct or divisible divine Person in God.

The Holy Spirit's divinity

One can martial a host of biblical texts which equate divinity with the Spirit, both directly – in using the divine names of Lord and God interchangeably and synonymously with the Spirit (there are nineteen instances in the New Testament alone); and indirectly – as pointers to the Spirit's divinity, evident in the Spirit's activities and abilities which are exclusively divine domains. W. H. Griffith Thomas rightly said: 'The allusions to the Holy Spirit are such as cannot possibly be predicated of anyone else than God himself.'[6] In the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Spirit is synonymous with the presenting, speaking, acting God. Peck says that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, no categorical distinction is made between God and the Spirit.[7] To speak of one is to comprehend the other. A few examples of the Holy Spirit's divine ascriptions will suffice to establish the point:

- Genesis 1:1–2 – God introduces himself as God (*elohim*), who creates the world in the beginning. The Spirit of God (*ruach elohim*), which hovers over the waters . . . is God (*elohim*), who speaks and creates.
- Luke 1:35 – the angel says to Mary, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God.' Most High is a divine title applied to the Spirit.
- Acts 5:3f – Ananias is accused by Peter of 'lying in your heart to the

Holy Spirit'. Peter then says, 'You have not lied to men but to God.'

- 2 Corinthians 3:3 – Paul speaks of the 'Spirit of the Living God' who has written on human hearts (echoes of Ezekiel 36:24–27). Most telling is 2 Corinthians 3:17–18, 'The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.' Then, echoing Moses gazing on God (Exodus 33 and 34) and reflecting his glory, Paul states: 'And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed . . . for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.'

The Holy Spirit's Divine Attributes:

- The Spirit is *eternal*. In Hebrews 9:14 Christ 'through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God'. The Greek word for eternal, *aioniou*, means 'without beginning or end'[8] and as a predicate is only attributable to divinity.
- The Spirit is *everywhere* (omnipresent). Psalm 139 is addressed in verse 1 to the Lord. But in verse 7 the psalmist states: 'Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!' (ESV) This key text states that the Spirit is the presence of God who is everywhere.
- The Spirit knows *everything* God knows (omniscient). 1 Corinthians 2:6–12 states that the Spirit reveals to us the wisdom of God. Paul's argument appeals to an anthropological metaphor in verse 11 that only a person's own spirit knows the person's own thoughts. Similarly, only God's Spirit knows God's thoughts, and the Spirit of God, who alone knows God, reveals the thoughts of God to man.
- The Spirit can be sinned and *blasphemed* against (Matthew 12:31). Ultimately, sin is against God, violating his will and way. Blasphemy is a thought, word or deed which manifests contempt for God. To blaspheme the Spirit is to reject God's saving plan revealed in Christ, manifested by the Spirit's power in which he ministered.

The Holy Spirit's Divine Actions:

- The Spirit is God *present* among us. In Leviticus 26:11–12, the Lord promises Israel he will be their God who will walk with them and make his dwelling/tabernacle among them. In part this was fulfilled

through the Tabernacle, later Solomon's Temple, where God's manifest localised presence (*shekina*) dwelt. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul takes this very text and says it is fulfilled through the Church, which corporately forms the temple of the living God. This theme is repeated elsewhere in Corinthians, as the Church in Corinth is the temple of God by virtue of God's indwelling Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

- The Spirit is *life-giver*. In Genesis 2, we see God creating humankind from dust and then bringing that to life with his own breath (*ruach*). Psalm 104:27–30 states that when God withdraws his breath / Spirit (*ruach*) there is death, yet when he sends forth his Spirit there is creation. The Old Testament understanding is of all life sustained by the providential sending of the breath / Spirit of God. In the New Testament, Paul says that the Spirit is life (Romans 8:2), gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6), raises us to new life (Romans 8:11).

The Holy Spirit's Divine Associations:

- In the *trinitarian baptism* in Matthew 28:19, discipleship – the identification with Christ's lordship by an individual – is signified by being baptised in the tri-personal name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Baptism into the name of ' reflects a Hebraic/Aramaic concept *lesem*, which means to be 'fundamentally determined by'.[9] The existence of the Christian disciple is to be fundamentally determined by a tri-personally named, tri-personal God. Subsequent interpreters rightly see in the triadic name an implicit equality among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

    Expanding on this text, Calvin says:

> For this means precisely to be baptised into the name of the one God who has shown himself with complete clarity in the Father, Son and the Spirit. Hence it is quite clear that in God's essence reside three persons in whom one God is known.[10]

It follows that the tri-personal God with whom we have to do, is the God from whom we seek and receive a Trinitarian blessing, hence in 2 Corinthians 13:14: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.' Murray Harris says: 'Without embarrassment, Paul has conjoined the Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit with God in benediction.' Parity of status is implied, for it would be blasphemous for a Jew to place alongside God any other name in

blessing.[11] We have seen that Scripture portrays a Spirit who sports the exclusive names of God, who acts like God, who looks like God and who hangs out on equal terms with God. To claim the Spirit is God seems a safe bet. 'The Holy Spirit is no less and no other than God himself, distinct from Him whom Jesus calls Father, distinct also from Jesus himself, yet no less than the Father and no less than Jesus, God Himself, God altogether.'[12]

The Holy Spirit's personality

Holy number-crunching: Confronted with the reality of the divinity of Jesus and the Spirit along with the Father, the early Church wrestled to the limits of their minds and abilities to articulate the mystery of how God could be One, as revealed in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4), while being seen to be identifiably and onomastically divisible. To escape this conundrum, some slipped into a rather platonic hierarchy, with the Son and the Spirit less than God, created, albeit exalted, subordinate demi-gods. However, the orthodox theologians in the East and West were searching high and low to comprehend and articulate the biblical witness, apostolic deposit and devotional experience of the tripersonal God. By the early third century, Tertullian in the West was speaking of *tres personae*, *una substantia*; while in the East, Origen was speaking of the three *hypostases* sharing one *ousia* essence. Both wrestled with matters of source – whether and how one came first in the triad, whether there was absolute equality, eternity etc. The universal Church Councils of Nicaea in 325 and Chalcedon in 451 defended trinitarian theology and formulated the language (focusing as need called more on Christology), and ratified the orthodox view – one God, in three Persons: one Person the Father, another the Son, another the Holy Spirit, who all share the same divine essence, eternity and glory. The later Athanasian Creed agreed: 'the persons are not to be confounded nor the essence divided'.

There is some debate about what the terms *personae* and *hypostases* actually meant for the ancients, especially in being predicated of divinity. The Latin *personae* referred to a mask worn by a character in a play or an identity enacted; while the Greek *hypostases* referred to an individual, substantial, actual being. These terms came to convey a sense which approximates to our modern notion of the identifiable, communicable, distinguishable self. For the Church Fathers, these were terms that they searched for and settled on, not semantically biblical in origin, but ones

which conveyed the biblical presentation of 'inner distinction' within the unity of the godhead, of distinguishable personality and ability to commune with humanity.

There remains a debate today about what 'person' means – a biologist, ethicist, philosopher, psychologist, theologian, communist, economist would all come up with rather different definitions.

Conscious of its limitations, I am working from a definition of the Person as a distinct individual possessing the traits of 'personhood', defined as 'agency, reason, language, intentionality, relating to others self consciousness'.[13]

The distinguished Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (d. 1965), coined the classic 'I-Thou' definition of personhood.[14] Persons are beings in relationship, communion, interaction. Unlike an 'I-It', which would be a person using something in a utilitarian manner, or relating in monologue, I-Thou is in dialogue, valuing, giving and receiving from an other. There is mutual, reciprocal, respectful interchange, self giving, receiving, risk, vulnerability, communion, bonding. This I-Thou framework has been fruitfully explored in modern theology by such giant theologians as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Paul Tillich in understanding human identity, the imminent Trinity (God in himself), and the economic Trinity (God in his activity within the world).

Who's who?: The descriptions of the Spirit are not as gender-specific as for God the Father and Son. In the Hebrew Old Testament, the word (*ruach*) is usually grammatically feminine and in the Greek New Testament it (*pneuma*) is grammatically neuter. In the Latin Bible, *spiritus* was masculine. The pronoun 'it' is commonly adopted. However, in John's Gospel, the proper name *Paraclete* is masculine (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13–14) and John employs the 'masculine adjectival demonstrative' '*ekeinos* – that one'.[15] While we may not want to apportion 'maleness' to the Spirit, we do want to say the Spirit is not impersonal.

Grammar doesn't prove personhood, but points towards it. This is underlined when Jesus speaks of sending 'another Counsellor' (John 14:16), someone like himself – and not an abstract impersonal force. This thought is supported when Jesus says the Spirit, not speaking on his own (John 16:13), will teach truths he has heard from Christ, speaking with

authority from the Father. These certainly imply a person in partnership with the purposes of God in Christ.

Qualities of 'personhood' exhibited by the Spirit: We have already noted that he *comforts, hears, speaks, teaches*. Other actions and possessions logically understood as 'personal qualities' include:

- Determining the Church's course of direction (Acts 11:12; 15:28; 16:6; 21:4) – the early Church was led by *someone*, not *something*!
- Helping and praying for the Church in her weakness (Romans 8:26–27).
- The mind, or *phronema* (Romans 8:27) – the capacity for intelligent thought, used exclusively as a predicate of humans and God.
- The will, or *boulomai* (1 Corinthians 12:11) – a term used of 'a person's desire, decision of the will after deliberation by humans'.[16]
- Feeling – the ability to be grieved or insulted (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:29).

These faculties can hardly belong to an inanimate, insentient, impersonal force or energy. They are traits of a living, dynamic, sentient, rational, relational person. Consequently, John Owen can say: 'For he to whom all personal properties, attributes, adjuncts and operations are ascribed and to whom nothing is ascribed but what properly belongs to a person, he is a person and so are we taught to believe him to be.'[17]

The Spirit is God is Person. Not an independent autonomous self, but a person in relation within the godhead, who reaches out personally to relate to mankind. Yves Congar called him 'A person without a face',[18] but a person nonetheless. In an old scene from *Coronation Street*, Maureen said that she believed the Holy Ghost to be 'a sort of essential essence' – perhaps thinking of some aromatherapy oil, oriental chi, postmodern 'flow', or 'The Force' from *Star Wars*. Maud Grimes piped up from her wheelchair: 'The best description I heard of was that it was a sort of oblong blur and that'll do me.' Well, it won't do me, nor may it do for you.

Conclusion

The Spirit is eternal, personal, powerful God. What difference does, should this make to my worship, work and my walk with him? The Lord the Spirit is able to see and to save, nothing I face is outside his comprehension or

command. But he is not a force or energy to be manipulated for my own ends, but Lord in his sovereign freedom, to be 'worshipped and glorified'. As a person, he is a 'being in relation' with me, a being / person wired for relationship. The Holy Spirit is not an *It*, not a *What*, but a *Thou*, a *He*, a *Who*. No oblong blur, but God, outgoing, outreaching, outstretching to me in love. The Spirit is not a vague, distant, abstract, incommunicable force-field, but Divine Lord and personal Lover.

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1 *Holy Spirit*, p. 7.

2 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 42.

3 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 14.

4 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 23.

5 Busch, *Karl Barth*, p. 494.

6 *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 130.

7 *I Want to Know What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, pp. 119f.

8 Bauer, et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 28.

9 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 888.

10 McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:13:16.

11 *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 938.

12 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:1, p. 459.

13 'Personhood' in Audi, *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 663.

14 *I and Thou*.

15 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 15; Turner, *Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, p. 178.

16 Bauer et al., p. 146.

17 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 65.

18 *I Believe in the Spirit*, p. 5.

2

TYPES AND TITLES FOR THE SPIRIT

Introduction

In the last chapter, we examined the Divinity and Personality of the Spirit. We saw that Scripture clearly presents to us the Spirit as co-equal, co-divine, co-eternal with the Father and Son, sharing in divine ascriptions, attributes, actions and associations. The subsequent term 'Trinity' was coined to articulate the three-fold Persons within the one Godhead. However, as Peck notes: 'It is true that the Spirit does the same things, with the same attributes and authority as God the Father and God the Son, but his share in what happens is distinctly his own.'[1] In this chapter, we will explore the predicates particular and distinctive to the Spirit.

Immediately, we find we are faced with a plethora of titles, metaphors and descriptions. St Gregory of Nazianzus spoke for many when he said: 'I am seized with dread when I think of the abundance of titles' for the Spirit.[2] If not filled with dread or intimidated by the abundance of the Spirit's titles, we can become sloppy and subjective in our reflection, narrowing our focus to those with which we more readily resonate, for various psychological, emotional or theological reasons. God is who he is in revelation. What the Spirit speaks or shows of himself, is what he wants us to know of himself. The individual Christian and the corporate Church fall into danger or error when they seek to construct or conceptualise God outside what he has shown himself to be.

Sadly, as Gaybba notes: 'we have lost the interest the ancients had in the meaning of names. For the Israelites of old, the name was not simply a convenient label for distinguishing someone, but the revelation of a

person's character'.[3] 'What's in a name?' asked Juliet; the biblical answer is the one with whom we have to do.

Calvin explained why we must give ourselves to sustained study of the Spirit: 'Until our minds become intent on the Spirit, Christ . . . lies idle because we coldly contemplate him as outside ourselves . . . But he unites himself to us by the Spirit alone.'[4]

The developing disclosure from Old Testament to New Testament

In both Old Testament and New Testament, the Spirit is the immanence of the transcendent Yahweh. The Spirit is God in his worldward, manward action. The Spirit is, as Griffith Thomas says, 'the executive of the Godhead',[5] the Spirit is God at work.

Though there are differences between the Spirit's working in the Old Testament and the New Testament, these are more often of degree, not of kind. Familiar motifs in both are of the *Spirit sourcing life* (Genesis 1:1f; Romans 8:2); *the Spirit anointing leadership* (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; Acts 6:3); *the Spirit bringing wisdom and revelation* (Isaiah 11:1f; Ephesians 1:17; Numbers 11:25; Acts 2); *the Spirit as moral agent* (Psalm 51:10–11; Galatians 5:16f).

There are, however, some major distinctions between the Holy Spirit's activity portrayed in the Old Testament life of Israel and that in the New Testament Church. Though present in the world, Christ inaugurates a whole new epoch at Pentecost when he and the Father send the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The Spirit comes in a new way, bringing new birth regeneration (John 3:3–7). The Spirit in the Old Testament anointed an elite few: judges, priests, kings. But this selectivity makes way for what Turner calls an 'epoch characterised by lavish outpouring'.[6] The Spirit now anoints *all* God's people, regardless of age, gender or status (Acts 2:17f). The Spirit in the Old Testament came on men primarily to equip them for service – in the New Testament the Spirit also brings existential satisfaction (John 7:37f) and intimacy with God our Father (Romans 8:15).

Perhaps the unique feature of the Spirit's operation in the New Testament is that of the fulfilment of prophetic expectation realised by the Church, through Christ. The New Testament ushers in the era which the Old Testament prophets anticipated and glimpsed as through a mirror dimly. The Old Testament expectation is the New Testament realisation. They saw that one day the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2); would

establish a new relationship with a new people by the Spirit, not the law (Ezekiel 36:25–28); would anoint a Son of David, a Christ, Messiah, who would come with the Spirit and usher in a new and glorious reign of God among the nations (Isaiah 42:1f; 49; 61:1f). This anointed One is the One who now anoints. As Bishop Stephen Neil noted: 'The Spirit in the New Testament . . . is not found anywhere outside the realm of direct and personal encounter with the risen Christ.'[7] Oh, how glorious it is, that we should be born in such a time as this – when God is so powerfully present among us through his Spirit.

Titles for the Spirit

The wind

The name 'Spirit' is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word *ruach* and the New Testament Greek *pneuma.* Both terms cover a range of meanings, including *wind, breath, air, blowing* – all of which find resonances in the biblical text. It was not exclusively used for God, but was a term applied to the *individual's immaterial identity* (Psalm 32:2); of a *demonic entity* (1 Samuel 16:14); of the *natural wind* (Exodus 14:21); and of the *innermost soul* of a being (1 Corinthians 2:11). The term 'Ghost' (from Old German *Geist*) found in older translations, is now somewhat misleading due to its change in meaning.

As a divine designate, Spirit conveys the idea of a *powerful force* which smites Israel's enemies (Judges 14:19); of the breath from God which *sustains life* (Job 27:3); and also of the *mysterious presence* of God 'who blows where it wills' (John 3:8), whose origin and destination remain elusive. In John 20:22 Jesus prophetically *breathes* on the disciples and says: 'Receive the Holy Spirit', the unction enables their commission – the ministry of forgiving sins where forgiveness is sought in Christ. In Acts 2:2, as the disciples wait in prayer, a violent wind (*pnoes*) from heaven blows and they are all filled with the Spirit (*pneumatos*), emboldened to speak and do the works of God. We must not attempt to domesticate this wild wind of God – rather we must inhale deep draughts of this vivifying divine life, setting the sail to be carried wherever he wills.

The holy

Only three times in the Old Testament (Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10 and 11) does the Spirit hold this name (*quodesh*), compared to ninety-three

references in the New Testament to the Holy (*hagion*) Spirit. Both Old Testament and New Testament terms reflect cultic associations with persons or items set aside, separated, dedicated to God. They also imply moral purity and perfection. God is described as 'the Holy One of Israel' (Isaiah 54:5) and Isaiah heard the angels around God's throne declare (in the 'thrice of perfection' Jewish idiom): 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts' (Isaiah 6:3).

The Spirit is said to be holy by virtue of his divinity but also his activity. John Owen says that holiness is the 'peculiar work'[8] of the Spirit – separating things profane and common to holy use and service, and infusing men with holiness. A. W. Tozer said: 'the Holy Spirit is first and foremost a moral flame'.[9] The operations of the Spirit are in the regeneration and sanctification of sinful humankind, who put faith in Christ's blood. The most repeated verse in Scripture is: 'be holy, for I am holy' (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). This is command, necessity and invitation. The Holy Spirit poured out on us in Christ facilitates this separation and perfection unto God.

The gift

Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that she didn't know the 'gift of God' and who it was speaking to her. That gift was the living water, who was the Holy Spirit (John 4:10; 7:38f). Repeatedly in Acts, the Spirit is referred to as the 'gift of God'. Peter says that the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' may be received by those who repent and believe (Acts 2:38). Peter rebuked Simon Magus for trying to 'obtain the gift of God with money' (Acts 8:20) and Luke states that the Gentiles received 'the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 10:45; 11:17). The writer to the Hebrews speaks of us having 'tasted the heavenly gift, and . . . become partakers of the Holy Spirit' (Hebrews 6:4 – see also Luke 11:11–13).

Irenaeus and Augustine declared that 'The Gift' was the precise and proper name for the Spirit. Cantalamessa says that this name is uniquely the Spirit's, his 'very own name'.[10] The gift is the giver, the gift of himself is God himself, the gift who gives. The term gift (*dorea* in Greek), conveys the sense of being unmerited, undeserved. The Spirit, sent by the Father through Christ, is the pure gracious benevolent free offering of God to live and love with humankind. Our reception of the Spirit is not as reward for good effort or good behaviour but based exclusively on God's generosity.

The paraclete

This is a term unique to John and, with only one exception, exclusively placed on Jesus' lips (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Variously translated as Helper (ESV), Counsellor (NIV), Comforter (KJV), Advocate (NRSV), the Greek term *parakletos* was originally a conjunction of two terms (*para* – alongside and *kaleo* – called) referring to 'one who is called to someone's aid'; and its rare usage outside biblical literature generally signified someone who 'appeared on another's behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper'.[11] Used once of Jesus himself (1 John 2:1), Jesus refers to the Spirit as 'another counsellor', or *allon paracleton* in the Greek (John 14:16) and, as Morris states: '. . . the legal aspect of the word is clearly prominent, so that the translation "Advocate" is in order. Christ is thought of as pleading His people's cause before the Father'.[12]

In the same way, this 'other' advocate comes to stand with and speak up for us. Loneliness, ignorance, fear and being exploited are the common lot of humankind; but what Jesus promises and proffers with the Paraclete, the Comforter, God the Spirit, is one who will remain with and not abandon us, one who will instruct us and not leave us ignorant, one who will replace anxiety with peace – no wonder Jesus said 'it is to your advantage that I go away' (John 16:7).

The love

Jesus declared that the first commandment is to love God, and the second is like it, namely to love our neighbour (Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:28f). Loving God and one another, is a mark of *imago Dei* – mirroring the reciprocal love within the persons of the godhead and the love which overflows into creating humans, who are free to enter the divine love triangle. God is Spirit, God is love, and whoever lives in God lives in love and lives out love (1 John 4:7–21). Paul says God has shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Spirit (Romans 5:5) and his great prayer for the fledgling Church was that the Spirit might fill them to overflowing with the inexpressible height, breadth, depth and width of divine love (Ephesians 3:14–19). Like a river breaking its banks, that love from the Spirit overflows, enabling us to love in the Spirit (Colossians 1:8; Romans 15:30); the first fruit of Love's indwelling is love (Galatians 5:22).

Augustine blazed the trail in his *On the Trinity* 15.17–19, portraying the Spirit as the 'bond of love' between Father and Son, who overflows in

loving humankind and enabling humankind to live in love with God and one another. He famously said, 'To my God a heart of flame, to my fellow man a heart of love.'[13] The authentic experience of the Spirit is to be loved. The authentic expression of the Spirit is to love. Love remains the criterion of Christian faith.

The Spirit of . . .

There are several other key designates attached to the Spirit which we shall examine in detail in subsequent chapters: he is called the Spirit *of glory* (1 Peter 4:14), *of truth* (John 15:26), *of life* (Romans 8:2), *of grace* (Hebrews 10:29). However, in Isaiah 11:1–3 we have an important prophecy, detailing the gifting the Spirit manifests in the leadership of Christ. Subsequently, these hallmarks have been regarded as key gifts infused into the believer on reception of the Spirit: in verse 2: 'The Spirit *of* the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit *of wisdom* and *understanding*, the Spirit *of counsel* and *might*, the Spirit *of knowledge* and the *fear of the Lord*.' This passage has featured in the Church's liturgy for two millennia, notably at the feast of Pentecost and the service of Confirmation. Textually, it is probably right to see a six-fold list in verse 2, however, tradition has always included the first clause in verse 3: 'his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord' as a seventh grace given by the Spirit. Notably, the features of the Spirit's gifts focus on the *intellect* and *will*. The Spirit overcomes the effects of sin in man, renewing the fallen mind in conformity to God's mind. His gifts 'orientate the Christian towards the horizon of God',[14] enabling man to love and serve and enjoy God. Modern Christians have focused much on experiencing the love and power of God; while valuing the experiential relations with the Spirit, we must also renew the Spirit's work in us affecting the intellectual and volitional.

Metaphors for the Spirit

Alongside the titles for the Spirit, we have several metaphors which further enable us to visualise and conceptualise different aspects of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

A hand or finger

In the Old Testament, the phrase 'the hand of God' (*yad yhwh*) is frequently employed to speak of the action, immanence of the transcendent God

manifested in power (Numbers 11:23; 1 Samuel 12:15; 1 Chronicles 21:13; Isaiah 48:13; Ezra 7:6). In the Old Testament prophetic tradition, this concept conveyed that immediate encounter with God marked by both profound experience and a prophetic utterance (Isaiah 8:11; Jeremiah 15:17; Ezekiel 1:3; 3:22; 8:1). In several of these texts (Ezekiel 3:14; 37:1) there is a direct equating of the hand of the Lord with the Spirit: 'The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord.'

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus states that he casts out demons by the 'Spirit of God'. Luke's account of this substitutes Spirit of God for the phrase, 'Finger of God' (11:20). In Acts 4:30f, the Church at prayer ask God to stretch out his hand to heal with signs and wonders, whereupon the place is shaken and they are all 'filled with the Holy Spirit'. You can tell a lot about a person from their hands: age, profession, hobbies, strength, hygiene etc. God's hands are beautiful, powerful, gentle, and they reach out to us by the Spirit.

A dove

The first time a dove is depicted in Scripture is following the flood, when a dove is sent out from the ark and returns bearing an olive branch, signifying that the waters have receded, judgement has passed, land, safety, and peace are at hand (Genesis 8:8). At Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:16), as Jesus comes out of the water, the Spirit descends like a dove and rests upon him; the waters of baptism have receded like the flood (1 Peter 3:20f); God's judgement on humankind's sin has passed. As such the dove, released through Christ's substitutionary death (baptism prophetically anticipates the Son of Man identifying with, and dying for, human sin) is a symbol of the peace, provision, and the passing of judgement through Jesus. A further insight comes from Jewish tradition, where the Spirit brooding over the waters of creation in Genesis 1:2 was understood to be a dove.[15] Thus, the Spirit of creation alights on Christ who will bring the new re-creation. Let the Church sing with Isaac Watts:

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quick'ning powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours

Fire

Fire is perhaps the primary metaphor for the divine presence. In the Old Testament, God's theophany, personal manifestation, is as flame of fire (Exodus 3:2). He led Israel by night in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). God's appearance in glory on the Holy Mount was as a consuming fire (Exodus 24:17). When God broke out in judgement against Sodom and Gomorrah he did so in consuming fire (Genesis 19), and similarly with Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:35). When God accepts Abraham's sacrifice (Genesis 15:17) and when Solomon dedicates the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1), he comes as fire. When Elijah asks God to confirm his word in confrontation with the false prophets, he comes in fire (1 Kings 18). In the books of Moses, which detail the mode of worship, the motif of fire occurs repeatedly, There are seventy-four mentions in Leviticus alone. God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). John the Baptist declared that Jesus would baptise with the Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). *Fire as God's self-disclosure*, *reveals him primarily in his blazing purity*; the Spirit comes, he comes as the fire of God, heating up, refining away sin's impurities (Isaiah 6:6f; Malachi 3:2f; Matthew 3:12). As well as purity, the *Spirit as fire speaks of passion*. When he comes at Pentecost, he comes as tongues of fire (Acts 2:3) immediately transforming these meek secret disciples into world changers. The Christian is called to be 'aglow with the Spirit, serving the Lord' (Romans 12:11), and commanded 'Do not quench the Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Kierkegaard wrote that: 'Christianity is incendiarism. Christianity is fire setting. A Christian is a person set on fire.'[16]

A river of living water

Ezekiel 47 gave us the image of a river flowing from the temple which transforms the stagnant swamps into fresh water teeming with life. Moses struck the rock in the wilderness, releasing a river of water for the parched pilgrims (Exodus 17:6; Psalm 78:15f; Isaiah 48:21) and the Church saw this as a type of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). The prophet Isaiah linked water with the Spirit with satisfaction: 'I will pour out water on the thirsty land, streams on the dry ground, I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring' (Isaiah 44:3).

The motif of the Spirit as a river of living, satisfying water is primarily located in John 4:7–15, and John 7:37–39. Jesus invited the woman at the well and the worshippers in Jerusalem at the feast of Booths, to come to him and believe, that they might drink of a river of living water, the Holy

Spirit. This river would satiate them and they would never thirst again. The Spirit alone can vivify and satisfy parts that others can't reach – the river of the Spirit turns the dry, dull and death in our souls into life – full, deep, rich, eternal.

Oil

In the Old Testament, oil was used for cooking, cleaning, and fuelling lamps. It was a symbol of provision and pleasure (1 Kings 17:14; Psalm 23:5; 45:7). Zechariah 4 presents us with a vision of a lampstand bowl full of oil with two olive trees standing beside it. The interpretation given is that God's purposes are achieved not by power, nor might, but by God's Spirit (verse 6). A person was set apart for the office of priest or king by anointing (*mashach*) with oil (*shemen*) (Exodus 29:7; 1 Samuel 10:1). When Samuel anointed David with oil to be king, the Spirit rushed upon him (1 Samuel 16:13). Thus, anointing spoke of being appointed to an office, with the use of oil, which symbolises the anointing of the Spirit, who enables that person to fulfil that role. Jesus is pre-eminently the anointed one on whom the Spirit rests (in Hebrew, *Meshiach*, and Greek, *Christos* – Isaiah 61:1f and Luke 4:18f).

James instructs the elders to anoint with oil any who are sick, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick well. The oil is not primarily for medicinal, far less magical purposes, but symbolises consecration to God and the invocation of the Spirit (5:14). Speaking of the Holy Spirit, John says we have received an *anointing* from the Holy One, that remains with us and teaches us (1 John 2:20f).

From the earliest times the Church – in exorcisms, baptisms, ordinations, confirmations and consecrations – has made use of anointing oil as a symbolic and sacramental invitation to the Spirit. The Church knows her need and God has provided for that with his Spirit, symbolised by oil.

Seal and deposit

'. . . you were sealed [*sphragizo*] in him with the promised Holy Spirit, a deposit [*arrabon*], guaranteeing your inheritance' (Ephesians 1:13f).

The seal was a mark, often placed on goods or animals which denoted ownership. It was a term used to describe the initiating markings given when joining a pagan mystery cult. It also functioned as a prophetic

eschatological sign – 'sealed up' for the day of judgement (Ezekiel 9:4; Isaiah 44:5). Note that no one or thing ever sealed itself. It was sealed by the one with authority who claimed it. The Spirit is God's mark, stamp, claim of ownership on us.

The deposit was used in a legal and commercial context to indicate a first instalment, down payment, or pledge securing a legal claim.[17] Its usage in the New Testament is unique to Paul, and exclusively used of the reception of the Spirit. The Spirit whom we have received is promissory of the full eschatological inheritance we shall receive in eternity. Just as both seal and deposit were something tangible and identifiable, so Paul can direct the Ephesians to their initiation experience of the Spirit's reception, which was self-evident. A 'sealing' which reminded them of their obligations to God; but also a reception of the Spirit as a 'deposit', assuring them of God's obligations towards and blessings for them.

The plethora of titles and typifiers for the Spirit are like facets of a diamond, all releasing divine inner beauty. They convey his nature, work and our rich experience of him. Vladimir Lossky helpfully says, 'All this infinite multitude of titles relate . . . primarily to grace, to the natural abundance of God which the Holy Spirit imparts to those in whom he is present.'[18]

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1 *I Want to Know What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, p. 120.

2 Quoted in Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church.*

3 *Spirit of Love*, p. 3.

4 McNeill, 3.1.3.

5 *The Holy Spirit of God*, p. 16.

6 *Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, p. 4.

7 Quoted in Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, p. 51.

8 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 57.

9 *Divine Conquest*, p. 99.

10 *Come, Creator Spirit*, p. 80.

11 Bauer et al., p. 618.

12 *Spirit of the Living God*, pp. 662f.

13 See Cantalamessa, *Come Creator Spirit*, pp. 133–135.

14 Gaybba, *Spirit of Love*, p. 223.

15 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 334.

Ponsonby, *More*, p. 96.

16

17 Bauer et al., p. 109.

18 *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 163.

3

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND JESUS CHRIST

Introduction

Clark Pinnock has said: 'Anointing by the Spirit is central to understanding the Person and Work of Jesus – more central than theology has normally made it. Christology must not lack for pneumatology.'[1] Pinnock is absolutely right. Grillmeier's classic text *Christ in Christian Tradition* details the development of Christology from the Gospels to the defining Council of Chalcedon in 451. One trawls this massive tome almost in vain for references to the relationship between the Spirit and Christ. Why is this? No sooner had the Church been established than her Christology was under assault on two fronts: Jesus' divinity and Jesus' humanity. The Church had to defend the apostolic tradition and scriptural revelation that in Christ we meet eternal God in historical man. *Docetism* (in Greek *doceo*, meaning 'seem' or 'appear') was undermining Jesus in his humanity by asserting that Jesus only appeared to be human, but this was a mere mirage, it being impossible for eternal divine God as spirit actually to assume humanity. *Adoptionism* was the threat on the opposite side, claiming that Jesus was human, good and godly, who at his baptism receives an extraordinary anointing of the Spirit, and at that moment was adopted, elevated in status, to divine sonship. In response, the weight of debate focused on 'Logos Christology' (John 1:1) and the doctrine of 'two natures'; Jesus the pre-incarnate, eternal divine Son of the Father who co-joins in time with actual, corporeal, fleshy human nature and personhood.

Consequently, the relationship of the Spirit of God to the Son of God and Son of Man was relegated. It needs resurrecting. One early exception,

which proved heretical, was called '*pneuma* Christology', a binitarian understanding of preincarnate Jesus as pre-existent Spirit or *pneuma*, synonymous with the word or *logos*. This was rightly challenged in theological developments, presenting us with a trinitarian doctrine of a three-personal, eternal God, but sadly, the Spirit proved to be the Cinderella in the cellar of the two other beautiful sisters.

A prime task of Christology in the early Fathers was to establish the eternity and divinity of the Son. However, a superficial study of New Testament literature demonstrates the prime place the apostolic tradition gave to the role of the Spirit in the life of Christ. We need to rediscover this.

The Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ

The prophetic tradition had looked into the future and seen a coming age hallmarked by the Spirit. This was to be ushered in by the Spirit 'anointed One' (*Meshiach* in Hebrew, *Christos* in Greek) (Isaiah 11:1–3; 42:1; 61:1–3); an era when the Spirit would be lavishly outpoured on all flesh, crossing racial, social and sexual divides (Joel 2:28–29), marked by an abundance of the prophetic; and a transplantation of hearts enabling us to follow God's ways (Ezekiel 36:24–27).

Rabbis taught that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel after the end of the last prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi and, whereas the first temple, Solomon's Temple, had God's glory dwelling in it, the second temple knew not the Spirit in residence. The last words of the last prophet are pregnant with prophetic anticipation that the ice age of the Spirit will melt with the coming of an Elijah figure, who will prepare the way for the coming Lord (Malachi 4:5).

But they would have to wait another four hundred years, as the fortunes of the Jewish people took a dive when they were invaded by the Greeks then the Romans. They longed for the coming of the Messiah, but having seen their nation invaded, defeated, destroyed and dispersed, the emphasis turned more towards the Messiah being a warrior-leader in the role of an anointed Old Testament judge, who would reverse their military and political fortunes, rather than a Spirit-empowered prophet.

With God's perfect timing, the long awaited, prophetically anticipated visitation of the Spirit-anointed One arrived, ending what Michael Green calls: 'The age long drought of the Holy Spirit.'[2] The first sign that the drought was ending and Scripture was being fulfilled, was with the release

of the Spirit of prophecy. Peck says: 'as if to herald a royal visitation, there is . . . an outburst of prophecy. This was remarkable because for [four] centuries there had been no prophets among the Jews'.[3] Elizabeth and Zechariah are both filled with the Holy Spirit and prophetically herald God's imminent, inbreaking salvation (Luke 1:41, 67). Their son, conceived in miraculous circumstances, is filled with the Spirit even *in utero* (Luke 1:15). Spirit-filled in the womb, he discerns and responds to the incarnate divine in Mary's womb (Luke 1:41). His adult ministry will be in the power of the Spirit and will fulfil the expectation for an Elijah figure: a Spiritman, preparing the way of the Lord through repentance (Malachi 3:1; 4:5; Luke 1:17; 3:3f). This spirit of prophecy is seen upon Simeon (Luke 2:25–32) and Anna (2:36f), who both prophesied at the dedication of the Christ child in the temple.

The Spirit of Jesus' conception

As God prepares the preparer, John the Baptist, who will prepare the way for the Lord, so God prepares the womb for the Lord. Mary accepts the angel's words: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Luke 1:35), and she is 'found to be with child of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). By the action of the Holy Spirit, the pre-incarnate eternal divine Word became flesh (John 1:14).

Mary's virginal conception (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:34) underlines the event as 'miraculous' (Barth) and as a 'gift' (Pinnock). Whereas John was conceived through natural relations but filled with the Spirit from birth, Jesus is conceived by supernatural action and not merely filled with the Spirit but *his very being is attributed to the Spirit*.[4]

The puritan divine John Owen has said that the designation of the Incarnation is ascribed to the Father in the eternal counsel and love of God: 'a body hast thou prepared for me' (Hebrews 10:5), and that the Son voluntarily assumed flesh and blood, and 'partook of the same nature' (Hebrews 2:14). However, 'the divine efficiency' in this matter was the 'peculiar work' of the Holy Ghost.[5] It is the Holy Spirit as the immediate divine executive, the agent of God's will, who weds the eternal Son with mortal humanity. The creative Spirit who hovered over creation overshadows Mary, creating, conceiving and connecting God and blood, making out of Mary's matter what was not before. The Spirit performs a regenerative or recreative work, not merely a creative work. The new

human life, born of Mary, is the old humanity from Adam's seed, which is joined to the eternal divinity of the Son, by the action of the Spirit.[6]

The pre-existent divine Son of his own volition 'emptied himself' (from the Greek *ekenosen*, to 'strip', 'empty', 'deprive', 'render to no effect' – Philippians 2:6f), and took to himself the form of a servant. The eternal Son's divinity was not exorcised, but neither would it now be exercised. Having divested himself from his divinity – economically though not ontologically – Jesus took to himself a fallen human nature – mortal and corruptible (Romans 8:3) and lived directed and dependent on the Spirit. Again, Pinnock says:

> The Word became flesh and exercised power through the Spirit, not on his own. The Son's self-emptying meant that Jesus was compelled to rely on the Spirit . . . the Son decided not to make use of divine attributes independently but experience what it would mean to be truly human.[7]

Even as the Spirit of God regenerates and recreates the eternal Son of God in our historical humanity, likewise the same Spirit of God regenerates and recreates our perishable humanity to be eternally with God (John 3:1–7; 1 Peter 1:23). Smail says: 'Christ is the prototype and promise for all of us, our sinful humanity is regenerated into a new relationship to God by the Holy Spirit.'[8]

The Spirit of Jesus' confirmation at baptism

The Spirit of regeneration is also the Spirit of unction. A veil of silence is drawn over the thirty years following the extraordinary events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Citing the incident when Christ was presented at the temple aged twelve (Luke 2:41f), confounding the teachers with his wisdom, Owen posits that Jesus may well have manifested the presence of God in performing extraordinary actions during the course of his private life up until he was thirty.[9] This supposition might be questioned when considering the miracle at the wedding of Cana which the Apostle states was the *first* of his miracles (John 2:1f). Regardless of this, it was not until his baptism that Jesus received the fullness of the Spirit's gifts, 'which he needed or of which human nature is capable of receiving'.[10]

When John began his ministry in the wilderness, baptising and calling the people of Israel to repent and realign themselves with God and his purposes, Jesus came and was baptised. Being sinless, he did not need to repent for his own sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22), but as sin-bearer

and Son of Man, he was identifying with the call of John and with the sins of the world. As Jesus arose from the water, heaven opened, the Father spoke: 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased' (Luke 3:22, ESV), and the Spirit descended upon Jesus and *remained there* (John 1:32).

The Baptist then directs people to Jesus stating that he is the One, *for whom* he had been preparing the way and the hearts of people; *on whom*, God revealed to John, the Spirit would descend as a dove; and *through whom* the world's sins would be taken away and the Spirit's baptism received (John 1:29–34). That the Spirit *remained* on Jesus, underlines him as the permanent bearer and bestower of the Spirit. Now, as the Christ, Messiah, anointed one, Jesus would begin to fulfil his destiny in Incarnation – the in-breaking of God's kingdom in power to overthrow Satan's rule, and the restoration of all things to his will.

Dunn sees this 'baptism' event as the key to understanding the distinctives of the Spirit's relation to Christ, an event marked by a deep assurance of sonship and intimacy with Father God and an effusion of eschatological power to manifest God's in-breaking rule.[11] This is crucial to grasping the Church's own relationship with the Spirit who brings intimacy and authority. However, though the charismatic and ecstatic are central, they are not exclusive. As we will see, Jesus' experience of *Abba* was a prototype for us, as was his ministry in the power of the Spirit. But the Spirit was operative in more significant ways in Christ, and possibly also in the Church.

The spirit of Jesus' confrontation with the demonic

Each of the synoptic writers portrays Jesus, after his baptism and reception of the Spirit, going to the wilderness and enduring forty days of fasting and confrontation with Satan. The three Gospels all place different accents on this event: Matthew (4:1) emphasises the Spirit's purposeful willing of Christ's temptation: 'Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.' Luke (4:1) emphasises that Jesus, '*full* of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil'; while Mark (1:12) underscores Matthew's emphasis on the intentionality and instrumentality of the Spirit, but increases the force with which Christ is sent: 'The Spirit immediately *drove* him out into the wilderness' (the Greek *exballei* means 'drive', 'cast', 'throw', 'hurl'). As if to further enforce the Spirit's agency, France notes that in Mark's

presentation, the only active verbs have as their subject not Jesus, nor Satan but the Spirit and, later on, the angels.[12] The Spirit leads Jesus, not directly into temptation, but into the wilderness to be tempted. But he remains and supports Jesus in this confrontation with evil.

The temptations test and reveal whether Jesus will use his power for his own end or whether he will depend on the Spirit. Jesus chooses 'perfect subjection to and performance of God's will',[13] 'aligning himself with the impulse of God's Spirit'.[14] By not using this anointing for himself, but living in submission and service to God, the Spirit is not grieved, and can now be released in power.

More than just a demonic challenge to the newly anointed and manifested Son of God, this skirmish with Satan is of the Spirit's orchestration. As representative humanity, the Son of Man is impelled at the initiative of the Spirit to experience what God's son Adam suffered – temptation. Jesus, the Last Adam, resists and conquers the tempter – he obeys where Adam disobeyed, and begins to restore what Adam ruined (Romans 5:12–21). On another level, Christ is a type of God's son Israel. Having gone through their waters of baptism (the Red Sea), Israel grieved the Holy Spirit in the wilderness (Isaiah 63:10). However, Jesus, after his baptism, in the wilderness honours God and returns 'in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14).

Both as a type of Adam and a type of Israel, Jesus is representatively re-enacting history and recapitulating their respective collapses. This is but the first round, which goes to Christ – the Spirit will be leading Christ to more confrontations, the final and most ferocious at Calvary. But as we shall see, Jesus' reliance and obedience on the Spirit will bring permanent victory.

The spirit of Jesus' charismatic ministry

Jesus returns from his wilderness conflagration 'in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14). Spirit fullness and affirmation of sonship give way to the Spirit's manifestation in teaching with authority and ministering with demonstrations of signs and wonders. All three synoptic Gospels portray Jesus travelling throughout Galilee, teaching authoritatively, exorcising demons and healing sicknesses (Matthew 4:23f; Mark 1:21f; Luke 4:14–41).

The Spirit's endowment received at baptism, tested and tempered in the wilderness, is now focused on the manifestation of God's kingdom. That

which is an aberration, a contradiction, a sign or result of the Fall, is transformed and renewed. The presence of evil is expelled, the scars that mar God's image in our body are healed, and the ignorance which blinds us to God evaporates in the light of Christ's teaching. All this is a work of the Spirit operative in Christ.

Luke underscores this when he pulls back the curtain on a scene from Jesus' ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21). Jesus is invited to read the Torah and he is handed, in the sovereignty of God, the scroll of Isaiah. He reads:

> The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight for the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Jesus then says: 'this day is this scripture fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4:18–21). Cometh the hour, cometh the man. This text, this Messianic mandate, details the purposes of the Spirit in and through Jesus:

- The Spirit is upon me (*chrio*, meaning 'anoint'), this is the Spirit's doing.
- To preach (*angellizomai*, meaning 'bring gospel') the good news to the poor (*ptosso*, means 'to cower', and the noun derived from it means 'beggar').
- He (the Spirit) has sent me (*apostello*) to herald liberty (*aphiemi* means 'freedom', 'release') to captives (*aichmalotos* means 'prisoner carried away').
- Recovery of sight for the blind (*tuphlos* is physical, spiritual or mental blindness).
- To set free (*stello* means 'to send away') the oppressed (*thrauo*, meaning 'broken in pieces').
- To herald the year of the Lord's favour (*dechomai* means 'to receive'). (The Jewish Jubilee theme [Leviticus 25:10] is evident, when all debts are cancelled, all slaves set free.)

The Holy Spirit orchestrates the event where the Spirit-inspired Scripture is brought to the Spirit-filled Jesus, who reads of the Spirit-filled ministry ushering in the eschatological epoch of the Spirit.

Jesus' subsequent ministry is a commentary on the Isaiah 61 mission statement: a ministry of healing, deliverance, social transformation and preaching the good news of the kingdom. Jesus does not minister in the divine attributes or possessions of divinity as eternal Son of the Father, but in his assumed, actual humanity, drawing on the resources of the eternal Spirit of God. Jesus states that it is the Finger of God, the Spirit of God who works through him (Matthew 12:22–32; Luke 11:20), and if people reject the signs they see, through Jesus, they reject God – blaspheming the Spirit.

Charismatics and Pentecostals have often suggested that the Spirit-filled ministry of Christ is a prototype for our own ministry. He was anointed in his humanity by the Spirit to herald and perform the signs of the kingdom. It is suggested that we can do what Jesus did, indeed we have a mandate to do so, and the Apostles manifested this, continuing his work. However, Turner rightly cautions us:

> The clear emphasis on the Spirit as the Messiah's endowment should also warn us against too quickly assuming [that the Gospels] present Jesus as a pattern for all other Christians' experience of the Spirit. Both the timing of his reception of the Spirit, and the nature of his endowment with the Spirit, might be anticipated to have unique elements according to his unique mission.[15]

Furthermore, Jesus was given the Spirit by the Father, *without measure* (*ou gar ek metron* – John 3:34), but to us, Jesus gives the graces of the Spirit *by measure* (*kata to metron* – Ephesians 4:7). In Jesus the whole range of the Spirit's gifting resided, but now it is divided up among Christ's whole body – the Church. The fullness of the Spirit Jesus received was not grieved or hampered by sin, but enabled to flow perfectly through this peerless conduit who obediently and totally aligned himself to the Father's will. Perhaps when the Church sees the Spirit's power as an anointing as servant, when we live our lives totally directed by the Spirit and not the desires of flesh or devil, when we seek to fulfil the mandate and ministry given to us under God, perhaps then we will see more evidence of the magnificence of the Spirit.

The Spirit of Jesus' cross and crown

The ultimate good news, the overthrow of Satan, the release of prisoners and the ushering in of the Lord's favour would not come through Christ's preaching nor his power ministry, but through his death. The Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness into confrontation with Satan leads him to the

ultimate conflict at Calvary. Jesus depended on God in the desert, and will have to depend on God through death. In Hebrews 9:14 we read: 'Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God . . .' The Spirit who 'anointed' Old Testament priests to offer sacrifice for sin (Leviticus 4:3, 16), is in priestly role, offering a willing sacrificial Jesus to be the atonement for humankind's sin. Even as the grain offering of first fruits (Leviticus 2:1), a type of Christ in his sinless perfect humanity, was offered to God drenched in oil,[16] so the Spirit presents the Son to the Father as a pleasing offering.

Jesus' death was not only orchestrated by the Holy Spirit but was the means for the release of the Spirit. In John 7:38f: '. . . as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified'. That glorifying occurs at his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, but also remarkably at his crucifixion. Jesus' prayer on the eve of crucifixion is that he might now be glorified by the Father (John 17:1–5). The agony of the cross is also the glory, because through it we are restored to God and may receive the Spirit. As Jesus dies, John writes: *paredoken to pneuma*, 'he gave up *the* Spirit' (John 19:30) not *his* spirit. Symbolically John is showing that it is the Holy Spirit, not the personal spirit of Christ, which is being released here. Then, after the resurrection, Jesus meets his disciples, blesses them with peace, and breathes on them, 'Receive *the* Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven' (John 20:22f). The cross is the fount from where the forgiveness of sins is purchased, and from where the Spirit is poured forth.

Owen suggests that a 'peculiar work of Spirit' was resting over the Beloved's body in the tomb, not allowing it to see decay (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31). He says: 'The pure and holy substance was preserved in its integrity by the power of the Holy Spirit, without any of those accidents of change which attend the dead bodies of others.'[17] Whether or not this was so, we know that the power of the Spirit was in the tomb, resurrecting, revivifying, raising Jesus bodily from death to life, from the shadows to light, from the grave to glory.

Speaking of this, the ancient apostolic Creed states that Jesus was 'vindicated in the Spirit' (1 Timothy 3:16) – his great power worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority and every power (Ephesians 1:19f; also Romans 1:4; 8:11).

The Spirit revivifies and resurrects Jesus bodily, transforming and transfiguring him, before ushering him into the presence of the Father, where he is seated at the right hand of God – the highest honour heaven affords, where Jesus now reigns in his resurrected manhood, the first fruits of the new humanity who identify with him through faith and baptism. The Holy Spirit who made Jesus' body 'meet for its eternal residence at the right hand of God and a pattern of the glorification of the body of all believers',[18] will also transform our lowly bodies by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself (Philippians 3:21). The perishable will become imperishable, the dishonourable will become glorious, the image of dust will make way for the image of the 'man of heaven' (1 Corinthians 15:42–49), all from the Father, by the Spirit, through the Son.

Conclusion

We have seen that the Holy Spirit is central to the life and work of Jesus Christ, operative at every key moment. He is the one who gives him birth in our humanity, who anoints him in ministry, who carries him to and through the cross, and who resurrects and glorifies him.

Traditional Christologies have often made much of Jesus' titles as a way into understanding him. Smail has offered us a fertile field suggesting the very names themselves speak of the ministry of the Spirit in him.[19] From eternity the 'Son of the Father' is given (Isaiah 9:6), a child is born, Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23).

- By the Spirit he is presented at birth and through death as Jesus – Saviour.
- By the Spirit he is presented at baptism and in ministry as Christ – Anointed.
- By the Spirit he is presented at resurrection and ascension as Lord – Sovereign.

Jesus' human story is inseparable and incomprehensible without seeing it also as a story of the Holy Spirit. That story is a prophetic prototype of the Spirit's story with us. The Christian's story is a story of the Spirit partially paralleling the unique story of Jesus. It is by the Spirit we are regenerated and born again. By the Spirit we are anointed to serve and extend the

kingdom. By the Spirit we will be brought through death and raised to glorious eternal life.

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1 *Flame of Love*, p. 79.

2 *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, pp. 32f.

3 *I Want to Know What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, p. 36.

4 Turner, *Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, p. 25.

5 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 115.

6 Smail, *Giving Gift*, p. 99.

7 *Flame of Love*, p. 88.

8 *Giving Gift*, p. 102.

9 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 122.

10 Ibid., p. 122.

11 *Jesus and the Spirit*, p. 357.

12 *Gospel of Mark*, p. 83.

13 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 354.

14 Joel Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 205.

15 *Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, p. 35.

16 A undoubted symbol of the Spirit – see Wenham, *Book of Leviticus*, p. 70.

17 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 128.

18 Ibid., p. 129.

19 *Giving Gift*, p. 106.

4

THE SPIRIT IN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

In this chapter I seek to offer a thumbnail sketch of the significant contributions and developments in the Church's understanding and experience of the Spirit over the last two millennia. Limitation in space and in author's comprehension inevitably leads to a certain reductionism, but I hope that personal theological commitments have not led to bias in selection and presentation.

The post-apostolic era

The earliest church communities did not engage in detailed doctrinal debates relating to the metaphysical ontology and divine properties of the Spirit. For them, the Spirit was the manifest presence of God, the risen Christ as Lord in their midst, transforming their lives, compelling their worship and prayer, impelling them to mission. Increasingly, the importance of the Holy Spirit as the *inspirer of the Old Testament and the growing New Testament corpus* of Scripture is emphasised by Barnabas and Clement (1 Clement 47:3; 13:1; 16:2; 22:1; Barnabas 9:2; 10:2). Outside the developing canon of Scripture, other post-apostolic significant texts, i.e. the *Didache* (c. 96) and *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 115), address the practical questions of how one discerns true prophets from false, both offering a test of 'character'; the *Shepherd* stressing the importance of deeds from *holiness* as evidence of the Holy Spirit, in contradistinction to the wickedness of evil spirits.

With the passing of the New Testament Apostles, the second-generation Church became more settled, moving to a model of Church as institution rather than charismatic community, from 'congregational egalitarianism to

settled ministry'.[1] As the Church's liturgy and theology developed and became more fixed, the dynamic work of the Spirit inspiring every member present sadly diminished (1 Corinthians 14:26). The professionals – bishops and presbyters – grew in authority, overseeing the event and content of worship, teaching from approved apostolic texts, presiding over the increasing central focus of the Eucharist. The Spirit featured in liturgical prayers, blessings and sacramental rites, but theology increasingly turned to Christology in the heated controversies of the third and fifth centuries, and the Spirit became somewhat relegated, and only came to prominence as a by-product of working out the Son's relation to the Father.

Montanism (2nd century AD)

Montanism was a Christian sect which arose in the late second century, in part a reaction to the increasingly institutionalised and somewhat secularised Church. Its prime personalities were Montanus of Phrygia, Prisca and Maximilla. This sect's notable features were their *eschatology* – they believed that the New Jerusalem was about to descend in the deserts at Peuza, where they gathered; their *asceticism* – they were particularly disciplined in prayer and fasting; their *ethics* – among other things they forbade second marriages. But the real cause for concern in the wider Church, was the claim to authority from their pneumatology. The leaders were seized by a spirit which led them into trances and ecstatic states, whereupon they spoke of visions and prophesied. This spirit speaking directly through them in an unmediated way, they claimed was the Paraclete, who differed from the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost. His authority in them, evidenced by the ecstatic and prophetic, elevated their status and authority above the appointed leaders of the Church. Their teachings were held as an important supplement to the growing corpus of New Testament texts for they asserted that the Paraclete was leading them into all truth (John 16:12f). Their biggest coup was to attract the African Father Tertullian to their cause. However when their prophecies failed and the Asiatic Council of 200 and Pope Zephyrinus condemned them, their influence waned. While their revelations may have been spurious, their brief but broad influence indicated a longing in the Church to restore an immediacy of the Spirit, which the professionalisation, clericalisation and institutionalisation had stifled, and they may have had genuine flutterings of the Spirit seeking to resist suppression.

Irenaeus (130–200)

Irenaeus argued against the Montanists and similar Gnostic heresies by claiming that all knowledge was revealed in Jesus and passed down apostolically to the Church. The Spirit never gave new truths, but bears witness to the Truth. Institutionalism and clericalism may have stifled the charisms Irenaeus believed in, but they held the Church together in the face of schism and error. Irenaeus argued that the Spirit could never be invoked as a support to prophecy which supplemented apostolic deposit. For Irenaeus, the Spirit works in the Church – where the Church is, there the Spirit is. Indeed, the Spirit was the one who gathered scattered peoples to form the Church as a united offering of praise, and was never the Spirit of schism.

Tertullian (160–225)

Despite a blip through his rather uncritical involvement in Montanism, Tertullian contributed towards the development of the creedal understanding of the Trinity. Writing against *Praxeas*, who held to the heresy sometimes called Modalism or Sabellianism (the notion that the Spirit and Son are modes of manifestation of the 'one' personal God, rather than a personal distinction within the godhead), Tertullian introduces terms and concepts of the unity of the one God who is a *Trinitas* of *Persona*, differing in form, not *substantia.* His language and concepts were later widely adopted to articulate the trinitarian nature of God. Less helpfully, Tertullian also saw the economic trinity (God in his economy of salvation) as trinitarian, while arguing that the Immanent Trinity (God in his eternal being) was undifferentiated divinity. Only at creation did the Father generate the Son, and only at Pentecost did the Son and the Father generate the Spirit. As we know, this was not to be taken up by the Church as orthodox doctrine.

Origen (185–254)

Origen in the East was doing what Tertullian was doing in the West. He was influenced by Platonic emenationist understanding of the relations between the *One* (unoriginated divine source), from which proceeds the *Nous* (the mind behind Plato's *Ideas*), from which proceeds the *Soul* by which the world was fashioned. He ascribes to the three Persons in the Trinity the term *Hypostases*, the equivalent of Tertullian's *Personae*. However, unlike

Tertullian, who sees the distinction in persons as originating in the economic salvation history, Origen places the procession in eternity. The Platonic influence led him to an inevitable and regrettable subordination within the godhead.

By the early third century, Eucharistic liturgies were developed where the Spirit was invoked (*epiclesis*, meaning 'called down') by the president, upon the elements of bread and wine, through which the gathered Church might be united and strengthened to the praise of the three-personal God.[2] Subsequent liturgies had either a single *epiclesis* (on the elements) or a double (on the elements and the congregants) and increasingly the *epiclesis* was understood to affect a 'change' in the elements. Sadly, the Church moved from a dynamic experience of the Spirit where everyone was listening and led by him in a whole range of spiritual inputs (1 Corinthians 14:26), to a stripped-down version, where one or two Spirit-filled men performed one or two Spirit-filled functions.

The creed-making Church

*Arius (*c. *260–336)*

Arius was born in Libya. His contribution to theology was massive, even if only by negation, causing the worldwide Church to gather in the Ecumenical Council at Nicaea 325, hammer out and agree on its theology. As a priest in North Africa, he was championing subordinationist teaching about Christ, but this inevitably spilled over into his doctrine of the Spirit – 'the Father's essence is utterly unlike the Son's and the Spirit's essence is utterly unlike the Father's'.[3] The great Council at Nicaea condemned Arius, asserting the Son was 'of one being' – *homoousia*. That Creed added as a footnote, 'and we believe in the Holy Spirit', but having settled the christological divinity issue, attention turned to the Spirit.

The Macedonians

The Macedonians, nicknamed the *Pneumatachoi* ('fighters of Spirit') opposed the doctrine of the full deity of Spirit. They were to the doctrine of the Spirit what Arius had been to the doctrine of the Son – arguing for a 'diad' within God – Father and Son. Athanasius (d. 373), Bishop of Alexandria, had fought against Arianism and now turned against the

Pneumatachoi arguing for a divine 'triad' not a 'diad'. He indicated the Spirit's divinity by pointing to his characteristics of sanctifying (only God can enable us to be perfect like God) as well as unchangeableness and omnipresence. He convened a synod in 362 in Alexandria, which stated the full divinity of the Spirit.

The Cappadocians

They were the distinguished theologians in the Eastern Church in the late fourth century. Their deep theology flowed from their deep spirituality which, in prayer and worship, placed the trinitarian God at the centre. Provoked by the Pneumatachoi, Bishop Basil wrote a classic text: *De Spirito Sancto*, insisting that the same glory, honour and worship be given to the Spirit as to the Father and Son – the Spirit must be 'reckoned with' them not 'reckoned below' them. Gregory of Nazianzus avoided all ambiguity by using the Nicene term used of the Son *homoousios*, 'of one substance', for the Spirit's shared being with Father and Son.

An interesting Eastern emphasis was that of 'divinisation' (*theosis*), the action of the Spirit to fit us for eternity as sons of God. If it is the Spirit who does this, who enables us to become one with God, he must of necessity be God. The Spirit is one of three *hupostases* (personal beings), who shares in the divine *ousia* (essence of God). Concerning origins, the Cappadocians introduced the term: 'Unregenerated, generated and proceeding.' Conceptually and linguistically problematic, they were seeking to comprehend eternity and the being of God with the limitations of finite minds. A helpful contribution was to see the distinction within the Trinity based not on *qualities* one possessed and the other lacked, but in *relationships*: the Father distinguished by eternal paternity, the Son by filial relation, and the Spirit by eternal procession from the Father.

The Cappadocian Fathers' efforts resulted in the Council of Constantinople in 381, at which Gregory of Nazianzus gave significant input. The Pneumatomachi were condemned and the full personality and deity of the Spirit within the Trinity asserted. The Nicene Creed, which initially said: 'We believe in the Holy Spirit', was expanded to include the Lord 'and the Life-giver that proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped together and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets.[4] By ecumenical decree, the Spirit was stated as possessing an equal share of dignity and authority within the godhead,

something orthodox worship and the apostolic deposit had always understood.

Augustine (354–430)

Augustine's work on the Spirit is found in his magisterial *The Trinity* – fifteen volumes written over twenty years. Affirming the tri-personal, co-equal nature of divinity, Augustine introduces the concept that the distinguishing feature of the Spirit is that he is the *Love Gift* of Father and Son to us. Father and Son are *Givers*, Spirit is *Gift* (Acts 8:20; Romans 5:5). This gift is not contingent on creation, but existed before creation, is always there within the godhead, should Father and Son wish to give themselves. Gifts flow from *Love*; this love is the bond which unites the Father and Son. The Spirit is the Gift of inexpressible communion between Father and Son. This does not mean that the Spirit is an 'impersonal' reality, for Augustine saw the Spirit as much a 'person' as Father and Son.

As this love bond between Father and Son becomes Gift, it follows that they both must be the source of giving, because the love is not restricted to Father or Son, but remains with both. They do not both separately give, but there takes place a single simultaneous procession from both, from one source (*principium*). There is, however, a difference between them: the Father is source of divinity, whereas the Son is sourced from the Father. Divinity rests in the Father as underived, but in the Son as derived. Thus, the Father can be said to be the principal (*principaliter*) source of the Spirit. The Christian Church has received this wonderful overflow of the gift of love between Father and Son, and we reciprocate by loving one another and loving God through the Spirit.[5] This contribution of Spirit as divine personal Love Gift has dominated Western theology ever since.

The medieval Church

Medieval theology is marked by a relative disinterest in the experiential aspect of the Christian life, whose *special domain is the Holy Spirit*,[6] with the Church engaging in political machinations and, at a theological level, moving towards more abstract philosophical issues. The theology of the Spirit was centred on a matter now regarded by many as considerably less significant than the energy expended on it warranted, that of the *Filioque* clause (Latin, meaning 'and the Son').

Looking back, at Constantinople 381 the agreed Creed stated that the Spirit 'proceeds from the Father'. This was accepted and ratified by all representatives of the Church. However, two centuries later, at the Spanish Synod in Toledo (589), the additional clause 'and the Son' was interpolated, claiming that the Spirit owed his eternal origins to the Son as well as the Father. This was then taken up by the Gaullish and Italian churches, and by the ninth century, Western monks were chanting it in Latin at their monastery in Jerusalem, causing uproar and conflict with the Greek monastery. Matters were referred to Pope Leo III who, while approving the doctrine, for the sake of ecumenical unity said it should not be included in the Creed. However, he had the clause engraved on two silver tablets in St Peter's tomb, and in practice it continued to be used in worship. Within two centuries it was adopted in the West as orthodox dogma.

The Eastern Churches were furious, partly because they had not been consulted about such creedal changes, partly because they did not agree with those changes. Political and theological conflagrations raged and ultimately, tragically, the two Churches broke fellowship, each side martialling arguments to defend their further entrenched dogmatic position. The Greeks wanted to maintain that both Son and Spirit owe their origin to the Father, while the Latins maintained Father and Son are one principal. The Greeks wanted to protect the distinctions within the godhead, the Latins to protect the unity of the work of the Spirit with Christ. Many observers feel that both have the *same fundamental concept with merely a different accent*.[7] The debate is obscure, metaphysical, and turns on rather speculative matters unproven either way by Scripture. Sadly, one feels that the wound was the result of the Eastern Church taking personal umbrage as a result of the West's non-ecumenical action, and more about Rome's power play, than about theology. While probably agreeing with the Western view, at the very least, the West ought to repent her attitude and arrogant actions towards the East.

Late medieval scholasticism

In the theological schools, the great scholars were as much philosophers as theologians: Anselm, Aquinas, Abelard and Lombard dominated, with their rationally orientated system of *quaestio*. Their concerns were primarily to 'understand God' and articulate God in his being and action, rather than to experience him. Little was contributed to pneumatology, although Peter

Lombard introduced a controversial doctrine equating charity or grace with the Holy Spirit. According to Lombard, when we love God and neighbour, this love is not simply an infused virtue or effect, but literally the direct action of God the Spirit in us. The problem with this was that it made no distinction between God and the transforming sanctifying work of grace in the life of the believer.

Mysticism

This arose in part as a reaction to the rather arid abstract philosophical theology of scholasticism. Life in the monasteries was ordered not by 'understanding rationally and defining God', but by 'seeking God' through Scripture, reflection, prayer, discipline, desire. An emphasis developed on relationship with God the Spirit, who is always the God 'experienced'. Three monks stand out, William of Thierry, Richard Rolle and, supremely, Bernard of Clairvaux. Their theologies were similar in style, language and focus. Theirs was a knowledge of God through encounter, not taught by deductive reasoning. As Bernard says, 'We speak of divine things which can only be known from experience.'[8] With traces of Augustine's Spirit as Love Gift, all were indebted to the Song of Songs as an allegory to be lived out – as the Bride, the Church, the Christian can experience, by the Spirit that flame of love, that languishing in love.[9]

The Reformation Church

This era was not particularly noted for its contribution to pneumatology. Against the backdrop of an authoritative, top-heavy Church system, with an emphasis on sacramentalism and legalism, the reformers fought to place such matters as Scripture, grace, faith, Christ and universal priesthood to the fore. However, in attempting this corrective, the relationship between word and Spirit would become crucial.

Luther

Luther added little to what had been said and agreed by the Western Church. He rejected the widely held medieval view that the Spirit was automatically made present when performing a sacramental ritual, or automatically present in the decisions of Papal councils and received traditions, or that God was compelled by a divine law to give the Spirit in return for good works. Luther emphasised the activity of the Spirit in the

event of justification by faith; good works were the fruit of faith and the Spirit's work, not a route to the justification and reception of the Spirit.[10]

The 'Spirit' and not the Church was the true basis of authority, for the Spirit and not tradition created the true Church. That Spirit had spoken in Scripture. In the 1520s so-called 'enthusiasts' appeared, radicalised reformers set free from the restraints of the Catholic Church and tradition. They felt Luther had not gone far enough, having retained such things as ordination and the sacraments. They asserted that only the divine inspiration and guiding of the Spirit were necessary, making Scripture somewhat redundant. Luther vehemently opposed these 'heavenly prophets' as he called them, arguing that the inner witness of the Spirit can be none other than the 'outer' word presented in Scripture – a message of grace, forgiveness and redemption.[11]

Luther claimed that God works both exteriorly and interiorly. The Spirit, while not trapped or conditioned by sacraments and institutional structures, nevertheless *comes to us* through these. Exteriorly, through the gospel and sacraments, and interiorly, through faith and the Spirit. The external does not work without the internal nor the internal without the external. Luther was no iconoclast, but he wanted to assert that the Church's ministry of the word and sacraments, while essential, still required the action of the Spirit and the reception of faith.[12]

Calvin

Calvin has been called the 'theologian of the Spirit' due to his emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the life of the Christian, which in the West had been largely lost since the Patristic period. Calvin accepted the Western tradition of the Trinity, the Filioque clause, and the unity of all divine activities in the godhead. However he, 'injects long forgotten life into that theology by his emphasis on the old biblical idea of the Spirit as God in action'.[13] For him, the main notion of the Spirit is not the traditional *love*, but *action*, implementing the Father and Son's will and design[14] – providentially creating and sustaining the world. The Spirit is primarily present in the world to bring about salvation – imparting faith to the individual, whereby they may be united with Christ by the action of the Spirit of grace.[15] This faith comes through the word preached. The Spirit-inscribed word is comprehended by the individual, through the internal enlightenment of the Spirit.[16] The Spirit internally authenticates his own word. But it is to the

Bible that we must go for this word.[17] As with Luther, Calvin opposed the fanatics for their claimed revelations, detached from that true power which was revealed in Christ, which recorded Scripture, which convinces us of the gospel, and which connects us with Christ.[18]

The Westminster Confession

This is the historic doctrinal presentation of the Presbyterian Church, completed in 1648. It became and remains the primary document, the benchmark standard of faith for Calvinists, Presbyterians and many Baptists. It underlines the intimacy and mutual dependency between word and Spirit. Article one, on Holy Scripture, states that:

> our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority [of Scripture] is from the inward work of the Spirit bearing witness, by and with the Word, in our hearts . . . nothing is at any time to be added – whether new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of man.

Article ten states that those predestined to eternal life are called 'by His Word and his Spirit'.[19]

Quakerism

Also known as the 'Society of Friends' or 'Children of the Light', Quakerism was a passionate movement in the heady days of the mid-seventeenth century. Led by George Fox, the movement was named after the manifestations of 'quaking' among members in its early years, credited to the Holy Spirit. It spread rapidly throughout Britain and America. Quakers lived humble, spiritual, ascetic lives, but came into conflict with the English Government when, according to their principles about not taking oaths, paying tithes or submitting to external authorities as their consciences dictated, they refused to accept the Act of Uniformity (everyone had to worship only according to the Book of Common Prayer) and consequently were persecuted and imprisoned. A prime notion influencing their theology and spirituality was that each person held within an 'inner light', the guiding immanent presence of the Spirit, who could lead them into all truth. Ordinations, sacred buildings and the like were irrelevant, as each could listen to the inner light and minister, inspired by the Spirit in their gatherings.

In 1678 Robert Barclay, a disciple of Fox, drew up fifteen propositions, an 'Apology for the Quakers'. Number two states that the Spirit who

diversely spoke to the prophets and patriarchs in the past, through dreams, visions, impressions etc., continues to do so through 'divine inward revelations which we make absolutely necessary for the building of the true faith'. In the third article, it is stated that Scripture, though proceeding from the Spirit, 'may not be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manner'. These Scriptures are 'a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit'.[20] This emphasis on the subjective witness of the Spirit, without the control of the Spirit-inspired Scripture, led them increasingly away from orthodoxy.

The 'spirit' of Quakerism, with its values of freedom from ecclesiastical structures and sacramental externals, with the 'Holy Spirit' as a dynamic personal possession operative in the individual – the interior life – finds parallels in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Catholic Jansenism, Quietism and Protestant Pietism. The latter, predominately in Germany, was perhaps more biblically centred than its Catholic counterparts, which were guided by the authoritative writings of Ignatius of Loyola and Madam Guyon, and Quakerism, which elevated 'personal revelations' over scriptural truth. Pietism also emphasised the 'experience' of 'rebirth' by the Spirit and his power in ongoing sanctification. One sees perhaps in Quakerism, initially, a genuine work of the Spirit, returning the Church to every member ministry and the ongoing operations of the Spirit which can contribute to the event of worship (1 Corinthians 14:26). Sadly, the loss of the control of Scripture and the rather iconoclastic rejection of many of the Church's structures resulted in a movement which all too often deviated too far from the historic faith.

The Enlightenment Church

Wesley

Wesley was a man of the Spirit – impelled in mission by the Spirit, who saw remarkable evidence of the Spirit's outpouring in his meetings. Theologically, he introduced a concept known as 'entire sanctification' or 'perfection' as a specific and key work of the Spirit.[21] There was an experience, which ought to be pursued, whereby the believer could be perfected in the love of God and man and wholly delivered from sin. The Wesleys, and subsequent Methodists, claimed this work was subsequent to and separate from conversion or regeneration, and took place in an instant,

an event, an experience not dissimilar to that of the Pentecostals, a theology not dissimilar to 'confirmation'. They named it 'the Great Salvation' or the 'second blessing'. 'Those that are made perfect in this way pray constantly without interruption, they feel nothing but love and are restored to the original image of God.'[22] Wesley's theology owed more to wishful thinking than biblical doctrine and actual experience, although he claimed Revd John Fletcher of Madeley was proof of 'perfection'. This notion became very influential in the nineteenth-century Holiness movement, which fathered Pentecostalism.

Hegel

The idealist philosopher Hegel (1770–1831) became an influential force inside and outside theology. He argued that all reality was the manifestation of the one universal 'spirit', or *Geist*. This Spirit was not a divine transcendent supernatural reality, but a force within history, culture and nature, driving forwards through a process of 'thesis', countered by the opposite 'antithesis', and brought to reconciliation by 'synthesis'. In this way, the immanent 'spirit' was articulating and actualising itself in the historical process. Hegel moved away from an orthodox view of the Holy Spirit by immanentising the spirit, de-personalising the spirit and conflating the divine with the human and historical.

Liberalism

Liberalism developed in the late eighteenth century and dominated in the nineteenth. It was influenced by the Enlightenment's rationalistic positivism – anything supernatural that could not be verified at the bar of reason was dismissed. It emphasised creation, civilisation and culture as the context for an impersonal spirit's activity in society, reducing the work of the Spirit in the individual to a mere cipher for morality. Schleiermacher became the dominant theological figure in the nineteenth century; he reacted in part to Enlightenment rationalism on the one hand, and Lutheran dogmatism of *rechte lehre* ('right statutes') on the other. He drew into his theology the tones of *romanticism* – an eighteenth-century movement which identified the Geist in the arts, the self, nature and culture. Consequently, Schleiermacher emphasised feeling and intuition over dogma and belief, identifying a universal 'sense and taste for the infinite', a 'feeling of

dependence on God'. He downplayed the role of the Spirit, to a rather opaque 'vital unity of the Christian fellowship as a moral personality'.[23]

The modern Church

With liberalism in the ascendancy, the nineteenth century saw some dramatic developments in pneumatology with the rise of 'Irvingitism', named after charismatic preacher Edward Irving. In the 1830s Irving began teaching on spiritual warfare and the imminent return of Christ. He called the Church to prepare by seeking the Holy Spirit. His ministry and meetings began to see revivalist phenomena – and some claimed manifestation of gifts such as prophesy, tongues and healing. Irving believed the Spirit was restoring the apostolic New Testament gifts. His ministry flourished, but he was excommunicated for unsound doctrine and practice. He helped to found a denomination, the Catholic Apostolic Church, and continued expounding his theology until his premature death at the age of forty-two. His death could have been prevented but, as he had with his three children, he refused medicine, believing for healing that never came.

Plymouth Brethrenism

The Plymouth Brethren movement was founded in England by former Irish-Anglican priest J. N. Derby in 1830. Like Irvingitism it was strongly pre-millennial, but rejected Irving's theology of the restoration of gifts. It was Calvinist in doctrine, pietist in devotion, exclusivist and separatist in its relations. It was spirituality centred around two main features: first, a recognition of the Holy Spirit's presence and sovereign action (1 Corinthians 12:4–11), with no formal leadership as members contributed at meetings 'as inspired by the Spirit'. Second was the need to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3–4), through a weekly 'breaking of bread'. Attempting to be strictly scriptural it experienced huge success and growth, but after a strong start, the movement's spirit of legalism and emphasis on theological minutiae caused it to falter.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism can trace its roots to the mid-nineteenth-century Holiness tradition in America. Wesley's claimed experience of 'entire sanctification' as a powerful post-conversion event began to be termed 'the baptism of the Spirit'. The rise in millenarial theology, the belief of being in the new age

of the Spirit, fuelled questions about the Pentecostal Spirit, and the absence of New Testament phenomena: *If we are in the age of the Spirit following Pentecost*, *why don't we see*, *do*, *experience what they did?* A good point indeed! In 1900, the Holiness evangelist Charles Parham encouraged his students to read Acts 2 and judge their experience of the Spirit against that of the phenomena listed there, to see whether they had received 'baptism'. They concluded that speaking in tongues was evidence of 'baptism', and began seeking the laying-on of hands. Some were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues. Later, one of Parham's students, W. J. Seymour, began preaching this doctrine and seeking this reality. At 313 Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906 the Spirit came, as at Pentecost, and a flame was lit that has spread throughout the world.

In a hundred years, it has developed into a movement influencing some five hundred million worldwide. Though there are internal differences in doctrine, its major contribution to the doctrine of the Spirit is the individual's experience of the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', a baptism more about 'power' than 'sanctification', and normatively evidenced by several factors: tongues and the immediacy of God; the release of the nine gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12); and the restoration of the five-fold apostolic ministries (Ephesians 4). This Pentecostal movement made significant inroads into the established Churches throughout the twentieth century, and there are now several hundred charismatic Christians within traditional denominations and new Churches, who, while not holding to the second blessing theology of Pentecostalism, believe in the experience of the Spirit as a living powerful reality, the exercise of the charisms, and the renewal of the Church's apostolic ministries.

Conclusion

We have come on a long journey of 2,000 years and have only been able to offer the briefest glimpse into the significant moments and movers in pneumatology. The early Fathers grappled with fundamental matters of ontology and divine relations. Later scholars generally accepted these, and focus shifted from high doctrines of pneumatology to how the Spirit works in the Church through word and sacrament, and in the believer through regeneration, sanctification and unction. We have seen the influence of culture shaping the Church, be it the language used by the Greek and Latin philosophers to articulate and conceptualise the Trinity, or post-

Enlightenment cultural shifts leading to liberal rationalism and reactionary romanticism.

From our vantage point over history, we can observe a dialectic between experiencing the Spirit and understanding the Spirit through doctrine. What is needed is a theology of the Spirit which holds both high doctrine and personal experience in creative tension, a Church who knows who it believes (2 Timothy 1:12).

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1 Martin, 'Worship', in Davids and Martin, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, p. 1, 236.

2 Bettenson and Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, p. 106.

3 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 848.

4 Bettenson and Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 33f.

5 Gaybba, *Spirit of Love*, p. 65.

6 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 852.

7 Schmaus, in Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi 3*, p. 57.

8 McDonnell, *Other Hand of God*, p. 186.

9 Ponsonby, *More*, pp. 27f, 34f.

10 Gaybba, *Spirit of Love*, pp. 96ff.

11 Heron, *Holy Spirit*, p. 105.

12 Gaybba, *Spirit of Love*, pp. 98f.

13 Ibid., p. 100.

14 McNeill, 1.13.18.

15 Ibid., 3.1.1.

16 'Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Internum', in McNeill, 1.7.4.

17 McNeill, 1.9.

18 Ibid., 4.12.10.

19 Bettenson and Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 344f.

20 Ibid., pp. 355f.

21 21 June 1784, from 'Wesley's Letters', Wesley Center website.

22 'Perfection', in Cross and Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1, 255.

23 *Christian Faith*, p. 535.

PART TWO

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORLD

5

THE SPIRIT AND CREATION

Introduction

The relationship between God and creation has been at the heart of spirituality and theology since humankind first walked this earth. If there is a God or gods, how does he or she, or how do they relate to the matter and context which frames human existence? Of course atheism, a rather modern latecomer to the debate, having rejected the notion of the existence of any divine personality, asserts that creation is a mere cosmic accident. However, most of humankind for most of history has taken a more theistic approach, generally understood within the following categories:

Pantheism (from the Greek pan *'all', and* theos, *'God')*

Undergirding Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism; this is a monist belief or philosophy where *all is one and all is God*. God and the universe are identical – which inevitably implies a denial of the personhood and transcendence of God – God becomes subsumed within the forces of nature and natural substance.[1]

Paganism (from the Latin paganus *for 'rustic dweller')*

This came to refer to any belief and worship of a God which was not monotheistic, and could include polytheistic worship and animism. In modern idiom, it has come to refer to the rise of a nature-based interconnected spirituality. Examples are Druidism, Wicca, Magick and Gaia, where the divine is immanent in all creation, and where understanding and responding to the rhythms of nature – the use of spells, incantation and rituals – enable the individual to control their destiny and that of others.

Gnosticism (from the Greek gnosis, *'knowledge')*

Gnosticism is an ancient composite of Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian spirituality and cosmology. There is no consensus of thought beyond an inherent dualism or divorce between the good god as spirit, and the evil hostile matter of creation. A core view is the notion of creation as the result of the emanation and fragmentation of matter from God over numerous successive aeons. Special keys of illumination and secret knowledge (*gnosis*) enable the Gnostic to ascend the ladders back through the levels to God.

Deism (from the Latin Deus, *'God')*

This arose in the post-Enlightenment era of scientific enquiry and particularly the closed mechanistic Newtonian universe. While not rejecting God per se, Deism asserts that God the watchmaker has set in motion an ordered deterministic world which does not need to be tweaked, and in which God rarely, if ever, puts in an appearance, thus negating miracles and divine interventions.

Panentheism (the Greek pan *means 'all',* en *means 'in', and* theos *means 'God')*

God is in all creation or all creation is in God. God is the impregnating, infusing, energising, animating force. This differs from the immanentist pagan or pantheist views which collapse God into creation and without differentiation equate the two. Panentheism seeks to maintain an immanentist view of God, while attempting to maintain God's transcendence. Found in romanticism, some aboriginal tribes, the spirituality of the Eastern Church and some forms of Christian mysticism, it is increasingly popular with the emerging Church as she engages with postmodern culture.

Some Judeo-Christian thinkers have identified with some of the views above. Infused with the influences of the age, they have at times divorced God from creation, either through a Gnostic over-spiritualised dualism, or emphasising a deistic *God in absentia*. While drawn to moderate panentheism, I am concerned that there is no sense of control, and it tends to blur the Creator / creature ontological distinction. Rather than making the error of conflating the creator, they make the opposite error of elevating the creature.

As we turn to Scripture, we see that God speaks creation into being (Genesis 1:3); daily sustains it (Hebrews 1:3); manifests his glory through it (Romans 1:18–25); orders it for our good (Acts 14:17); is the goal and object of creation (Colossians 1:16); and will recreate the fallen, groaning creation (Romans 8:20f) into a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1). Biblically we reject the poles of Pantheism and Gnosticism – there is no *dualist / deist* chasm between God and creation, but neither is there a *pagan / pantheist* collapse of God into creation.

I want to propose a new category to define the biblical revelation of God's connection with creation: Pan*meta*theism (*pan* means 'all', *meta* means 'with', and *theos* means 'God'). This conveys my understanding that God is never subjected to or subsumed within creation, yet he is far more than just the architect, builder or caretaker of the cosmos. He is intimately connected with it, and were he to withdraw his word and power and breath, it would be no more. However, the ontological gulf remains even when the Spirit permanently and structurally bridges this.

In this chapter, I want to focus particularly on the unique role the Holy Spirit plays in this polarity, a creative tension of the presence and absence of God, immanent and transcendent in creation.

Lord, the giver of life

The fourth-century Nicene Creed, noted for its brevity on the Spirit, primarily concerned as it is with the doctrine of Christ's divinity, nevertheless presents us with, in a cameo of clarity, the nature and work of the Spirit: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life.' This statement holds both the transcendence and the immanence of God in relation to creation:

- 'Transcendence' – he is the Lord, perfect in freedom, sovereignty, aseity, uncontained, unrestrained, self-willing sovereign God.
- 'Immanence' – he is the *giver of life*, the one who moulds and holds life in his hand.

While the Creed does state that the Father Almighty is *the maker of heaven and earth*, the Church Fathers, as proof of his being divine and not a creature, unite in ascribing to the Spirit the works of creation – he is *Spiritus Creator*. For Ambrose: 'the Holy Spirit is not a creature but Creator'.[2] While Augustine writes: 'They judge badly who confuse the

creature with the Creator and think that the Creator Spirit of God is one of the creatures.'[3] And in Thomas Aquinas: 'The Holy Spirit is the very principle of the creation of things.'[4]

Interestingly, John Owen divided up and apportioned distinct roles to the different persons of the Trinity. Thus he said that the Father was responsible for the *beginning* of creation (Romans 11:36); to the Son went responsibility for the *subsisting* and *establishing* (Colossians 1:17); and to the Spirit, responsibility for *finishing* these works. Owen says this *peculiar work* of the Spirit is to *perfect* the divine works.[5] While certain texts might selectively be drawn to support this particularity, trinitarian theology drawn from Scripture and tradition resists too clearcut an apportioning, positing a mutual sharing of all divine persons in all God's works.

Tom Smail wonders whether the 'life' referred to in the Creed concerns the general life shared by all living creatures or the regeneration of the believer in God. He suggests that the Old Testament points to the former, while the New Testament points to the latter.[6] Indeed, Griffith Thomas has distanced himself from any notion that the Spirit is actively associated or immanent in the world and states that the New Testament nowhere offers us any suggestion to that effect.[7]

Let us examine the relevant texts relating to this Spirit of life:

Genesis 1:1–2

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.'

The word 'hover' (*rahap*) is rare in the Old Testament, but descriptive in Deuteronomy 32:11 of an eagle protectively hovering over its young. This is the sense it also has in other ancient Semitic languages. While it is possible to interpret *ruach* as 'wind' and see this hovering as the whirling of the wind, tradition generally translates *ruach* as 'spirit', and this hovering is seen metaphorically, as the motion of a bird. Some import the motif from Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:16) of the Spirit as dove, and suggest the Spirit was brooding or gestating on the waters like a bird incubating eggs in her nest. Owen says:

Without the Spirit all was a dead sea, a rude inform chaos, a confused heap covered with darkness, but by the moving of the Spirit of God upon it, he communicated a quickening

prolific virtue . . . an inconceivable variety compose its host and ornament, were communicated to it.[8]

Calvin says:

The Spirit of God was expanded over the abyss of shapeless matter . . . the beauty which the world displays is maintained by the invigorating power of the Spirit, but even before this beauty existed, the Spirit was at work cherishing the confused mass . . . his being diffused over all space, sustaining, invigorating, and quickening all things, both in heaven and on earth.[9]

Whereas other ancient creation myths understand the cosmos in pantheistic terms, one even as the carcass of a pagan goddess, this Genesis text makes a distinction between creation and creator. God's Spirit, while intimately involved in the creation from its inception, nevertheless is not to be identified with it, remaining transcendent and 'other'. The expression: 'hovering *over* the face of' *locates* the Spirit with creation but does not *equate* the Spirit with creation.

Genesis 2:7

'. . . then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature'.

God creatively fashions man from the dust. He is not a random accident in eternity but precision made by the mind, wind and hand of God. Manufacture of man by the gods from clay is an image found in other ancient creation texts, with life coming through divine sparks or divine blood. Genesis brings a remarkable distinctive. Into the lifeless form, God's own breath is breathed and Adam is brought to life. The term breath (*neshama*) differs slightly from *ruach* ('breath', 'wind' or 'spirit') though is semantically akin. Whereas *ruach* is widely applied (four hundred times) in the Old Testament to God, man and animals, *neshama* (breath) is rarer (used twenty-five times) and applied only to God and man. Does the writer in Genesis employ this rarer term to underscore the uniqueness of the life of man who alone is the recipient of divine breath?[10] While in Genesis 2:19 it states that the animals are also formed by God, they are not credited with the unique direct breath of God that gives life to man and his successors. As Owen says: 'into this formal dust, God breathed the breath of life, a vital immortal spirit, something of himself, somewhat immediately of his own, not of any created matter'.[11]

Job 33:4

'The Spirit of God has made me and his breath gives me life.'

Just like Adam, Job's interlocutor Elihu was formed and fashioned by the Spirit (*ruach*) of God, when the breath (*neshama*) of God gave this lump of clay life. God was personally involved in creating this individual, not just the original pair in Eden (see also Job 32:8).[12]

Psalm 104:24–30

O Lord how manifold are your works, in wisdom you have made them all, the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan which you formed to play in it. These all look to you to give them food in due season . . . When you hide your face they are dismayed, when you take away their breath [*ruach*] they die and return to dust. When you send forth your Spirit [*ruach*] they are created. You renew the face of the earth.

This is perhaps the most glorious passage in Scripture articulating God's ongoing sustaining vivifying presence in creation through his Spirit. God is the sole creator and sustainer of the world. He is responsible for its vastness and the variety of its living creatures. He oversees the rhythms of the seasons (cf: Acts 14:17), he provides the source and sustenance of life. 'The power of life and death are his: Yahweh's own breath is the secret of physical life' (Genesis 2:7; 6:17).[13] Life is God's breath, God's Spirit. As Weiser says: 'When God holds his breath then what is alive becomes dust.'[14]

In the intertestamental period, the writer declares in the Wisdom of Solomon 1:7: 'the Spirit of the Lord fills the whole earth, holds all things together and knows all that is said'. The Spirit is ceaselessly at work, creating and renewing the face of the earth. To remove his presence leads us down what Cantalamessa calls, 'the Path to Nihilism'.[15] He cites Ambrose who beautifully states: 'If it were possible to remove the Spirit from creation, all beings would become confused and the life in them would appear to have no law, no structure, no ordered purpose whatsoever. Without the Spirit, the entire creation would be unable to continue in being.'[16]

Acts 17:27–28

'Yet God is actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being.'

In a speech to the sophisticated Greek thinkers at the Areopagus, Paul presents a picture of God (Acts 17:24–26) drawn from the same theological pool as Psalm 104. He states that God has created the world, vivified mankind with life and breath, and established the seasons and boundaries which frame our existence. All this teleologically that humankind might seek God and find him. Paul then paraphrases two Greek poetic lines which speak of the immanence of God – *who is not far from all of us and in whom we live*, *move and have our being*! Paul's point is polemical – how can they worship diminished, localised, man-made idols which self-evidently aren't this remarkable man-making Divine?

It must be noted that Paul is not using their poets as infallible authorities, but as illustrations, a point of contact (in German *anknupfungspunkt*) between his message and the worldview of his listeners. However, the positive use of the Greek poets' quotes which confirm the Hebrew thought, point towards the creation *immanence of God* and *all* humankind's *dependence* for life upon him. In Romans 8:20f Paul speaks of the whole of creation being subjected to futility, looking towards freedom from bondage and decay, looking towards glory, groaning as in the pains of childbirth.

The redeeming reconciling work of Christ restores not only fallen humanity to glory, but also the whole cosmos, which suffers as a consequence of the Fall. Sin opened up a Pandora's Box of death, decay and destruction in the whole earth. Whether through direct action of man's sinful relating to the world, or God's curse on man and the ground, or a door opened to demonic destruction, the creation is not what she was created to be. She suffers and mourns (Isaiah 24:4; Jeremiah 4:28; 12:4), but in hope awaits a time when she will shout and sing for joy (Psalm 65:12f). The earth is 'frustrated' through man's sin and failure to enable her to attain the ends for which she was made. The restoration of humanity is inextricably tied to a restoration of creation. When man is redeemed and glorified, all creation will be also. 'The ultimate destiny of creation is not annihilation but transformation.'[17] And so we read how:

- In Romans 8:22 – the whole of creation has been groaning.
- In Romans 8:23 – we who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly.
- In Romans 8:26 – the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The three-fold semantic parallelism of *groaning*: by creation, by the believer and by the Spirit, suggests that the Spirit is agonising in and with and for that which he fashioned, formed and sustains. Ultimately, triumphantly, such sufferings will pass and creation will be transformed, then groaning will give way to glory at the renewal of all things.

Summary

Scripture is clear that the Holy Spirit is intimately involved with creation

As divine person, the Spirit *decreed* the world into being, willing its existence; the Spirit *designed* the world, its massive form, its minute detail; the Spirit is the *dynamic* energising power which gives life and sustains life; the Spirit is the *destiny* of the world – driving it through decay and renewal towards its ultimate consummation. Were the Spirit to withdraw his presence, all that remained would be vacuous and chaotic. Scientists pursue the holy grail of 'the universal unifying theory of everything' that holds together all factors for life as we know it. Quantum mechanics, Newtonian physics, biology, chemistry – all these the Spirit of God creates, preserves and drives to their goal – ultimate intimate union between God and humankind.

Scripture is unclear on the exact manner in which the Spirit sustains and infuses creation with life

J. V. Taylor speaks of the Spirit as 'God on the inside' – the God behind the physical laws and natural processes. Taylor says: 'God . . . must not be found in isolated intrusions, not in any gaps, but in the very process itself.'[18] Moltmann has described *ruach* as: 'the confronting event of God's efficacious presence which reaches into the depths of human existence, indeed of all created beings.' From this he moves quickly to deduce that the immanence of the Spirit as the 'power of creation and wellspring of life enables and confronts us with the possibility of perceiving God in all things and all things in God'.[19]

But Moltmann moves too fast and too far and does not sufficiently deal with the distinctives between creature and creator, nor does he safeguard against over-identifying one with the other. Panentheism does not sufficiently secure God's sovereign free lordship; always running the risk of confusing creation with its creator and conflating the divine or inflating the creature – the very idolatry condemned in Romans 1:18–25 as archetypal of

Gentile sin. I therefore have humbly posited a new category *Panmetatheism*, 'God with all'. Intimate but separate, affirming the immanence of God *with* creation, while maintaining his transcendence.

Scripture is clear that the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer is a radical novum, without comparison to the Spirit's role in creation

Distinctions must be drawn between the Spirit's general life-giving activity in creation and his particular presencing in the Church and the believer. Though the Old Testament affirms the ongoing intimate action of the life-giving presence of the Spirit in creation, it also hopes and anticipates a new, profoundly powerful and personal relationship with God by his Spirit (Joel 2; Ezekiel 36). This was enabled only through Christ (John 1:32f), and ushered in at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter can say that possession of the Spirit is dependent on faith, repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38), and Jude can say that certain people are 'devoid of the Spirit' (verse 19). Whatever the previous and existing relationship the Spirit has with creation, it differs quantitatively and qualitatively from that of the new created humanity. The believers' relationship with Christ utterly transforms the previous dependence on, but ignorance of, the Spirit. It is not simply a case of 'more of the same'.

Conclusion

Often, the Protestant Church has restricted and reduced the Spirit's activity to biblical, individual, spiritual and moral categories, while the Catholic Church has focused on the Spirit's operation within the Church, her sacraments, orders and decrees. Scripture shows us that such a focus diminishes the Person and Work of the Third Person of the Godhead.

> The Holy Spirit's sphere of activity is not confined to the church or the history of salvation but reaches as far and as wide as creation itself . . . No period of time was ever or will ever be without the active presence of the Spirit. The Spirit is at work apart from the Bible and within the Bible; the Spirit was at work before Christ, in the time of Christ and after Christ – though of course never without reference to Him.[20]

Even great theologians like Karl Barth have spoken in almost Gnostic terms of a God who *touches the world like a tangent to a circle*! But the Puritans, Calvin and Owen, both used the rich and warm verb 'cherish' to describe the Spirit's activity in the world – a beautiful reminder for us of how

precious creation is to him – all God's divine energies went to work to create it and is still at work sustaining it.

We may ask, 'So what?' Let me offer a few implications of the doctrine of *Creator Spiritus*:[21]

- The Spirit's presence with and passion for creation must lead us to a greater appreciation, wonder, and awe in God who made this for us.
- The Spirit's presence with and passion for creation must lead us to a deeper synthesis between our doctrines of creation and redemption; the Spirit is preparing the bridal suite for the eternal romance.
- The Spirit's presence with and passion for creation must lead theological thinkers to engage creatively and intellectually with science, and to engage at a practical level with respect for and a sense of responsibility towards the ecological structure of this world.
- The Spirit's presence with and passion for creation led to his groaning with and for it, awaiting the day of redemption. We look at the glorious cosmos and in wondrous awe know 'the best is yet to be'.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights of the black west went
Oh morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.[22]

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1 'Pantheism', in *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*.

2 *On the Holy Spirit*, iii.139, quoted in Cantalamessa, p. 78.

3 *Commentary on Psalms*, 32.ii.2, quoted in Cantalamessa, p. 78.

4 *Contra Gentiles*, IV.20, quoted in Cantalamessa, p. 78.

5 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 78.

6 *Giving Gift*, p. 167.

7 *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 186.

8 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 79.

9 McNeill, 1.8.14.

10 Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, p. 159.

11 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 79.

12 Hartley, *Book of Job*, p. 438.

13 Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, p. 34.

14 *Psalms*, p. 670.

15 *Come, Creator Spirit*, p. 35.

16 *On the Holy Spirit*, 2.5.33.

17 Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 517.

18 *Go-Between God*, p. 28.

19 *Spirit of Life*, p. 35.

20 Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, p. 30.

21 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, pp. 62f.

22 Gerard Manley Hopkins, *God's Grandeur and Other Poems*.

6

THE SPIRIT OF JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

Isaiah 42:1: ‘I have put my Spirit upon Him – he will bring forth justice to the nations.’

Micah 3:8: ‘I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice . . .’

Introduction

In the last chapter, we considered how the Holy Spirit was actively abroad in the world he created, sustaining all things by his breath. We rejected the Pantheist / Deist, Panentheist / Gnostic polarity which on the one hand collapsed the Spirit into the creation or on the other placed too radical a distance between creation and creator. We posited a new term to describe what we saw as the biblical witness: *Panmetatheism*, ‘God-with-all’, showing how the Creator Spirit, is divine Lord, sovereign God, and ontologically separate, while being also the *giver of life* – intimately acquainted with creation and the animating power of all living things. But we want to go further and say that the Spirit is also involved, not just in the platform of creation, not just the drama of salvation, but in the warp and weft of human existence.

Tragically, through persecution or particularities in her theology, the Church has often withdrawn from society, establishing her holy huddles, reducing the life of the Spirit to the interior life of the believer or Christian community. But the Spirit who creates and regenerates creation cares, not just for the Church but for the world, not just for the redeemed but for the unredeemed, not just for the interior life but the exterior one, not just for the eternal soul but the temporal body, not just for our justification but for justice.

Kilian McDonnell says: ‘One of the tasks of theology is the re-possession of vast areas of culture’,[1] and the Holy Spirit is always inhabiting, directing

and enabling the Church to bring the heart of God to the hurting world.

The Spirit's qualities of justice and compassion

The Spirit of love and justice which confronts sin in all its forms

The 'evangelical gospel' has focused on confronting sin in the life of the individual that we might be reconciled with God. The so-called 'social gospel' has sought to confront sin in the structures which frame human existence that we might be reconciled with ourselves and others, in our social and creational context. Often the two have been held at arm's distance. Here I want to argue that it is the same Spirit who seeks to reconcile sinful humankind with God and seeks to clean up the mess that our sins have caused in his world!

Sin has produced dislocation, not just between the individual and God, but at every level of human life: morally, intellectually, relationally, socially, culturally, politically. Poverty, abuse, addiction, crime, violence, wars, sickness, pain, racism, sexism, oppression, injustice – all these stem from sin.

But, how and where exactly is the Spirit at work in the history and culture that frames humanity? Primarily, I want to say, through the *word* of witness by the Church, to the work of Christ at Calvary, which brings eternal salvation. Secondly, in *wonders*: empowering the Church with charisms of revelation, discernment and wisdom, to know what to say and do and the power to heal and deliver lives touched by the Fall and the evil one. Thirdly, in the *works* of the Church, in the love of the Spirit, to the establishing of Christ's kingdom rule and confronting and reversing those structures of sin in the individual or society. The latter is the main focus of this chapter.

The Church, indwelt and led by God's Spirit, will reflect the heart of God. Driven by the vision of the eternal kingdom of God, we seek to *echo eternity* in advance of Christ's return and reign. We are not merely to pray 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven'; we are also to work towards that end. In particular, two hallmarks of the character of God should be evidenced in the Church's mission – righteousness and love. The God of justice will judge us on whether we have lived justly. The God of love who deeply loves the world calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Scripture spoils us for choice in seeing these as primary concerns reflecting a core characteristic of God (Deuteronomy 16:20; Psalm 82:3f; 103:6;

146:7–9; Proverbs 16:11; 21:3; Isaiah 56:1; 58:1f; Micah 6:6f; Zephaniah 3:5; Matthew 15:32; John 3:16; 1 John 4:16).

The Church has a mission mandate to pray and preach and practise the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. The Holy Spirit is God's immanent presence, empowering and motivating us in that mission, filling the Church to fill the world with his nature of loving justice. When we keep in step with the Spirit, we will have an agenda which reflects this character of God.

The Spirit-led ministry of Christ was to the whole of man not just the soul

Jesus came to usher in the kingdom of God. He preached the gospel of repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:14f); he healed the sick and set people free from demonic enslavement (Mark 1:21–39). He fed the hungry (Matthew 15:32f), challenged unjust structures which oppressed the poor (Matthew 21:12f), and declared that salvation was evidenced by ending the misuse of power for financial gain (Luke 19:8–10). Most shockingly to our Protestant-focused spirituality, Jesus disclosed that a factor in our eternal standing is determined by whether we side with and serve the poor and oppressed – feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner (Matthew 19:21; 25:31f; Acts 10:4). We are not saved on the basis of our ministry to the needy, but proof that we are saved is found in our ministry to the needy.

The messianic prophesy in Isaiah 61:1f is claimed and fulfilled by Christ (Luke 4:18f). 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' [cf: Isaiah: 'He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted']. 'He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' The Isaiah text, slightly tweaked by the New Testament writer, shows that the Messiah's ministry is one which does not merely 'hurl words at the poor'[2] but is a ministry of righteousness, whereby he will empower them and enact justice for them (Isaiah 11:3, 4).

The Spirit-led Christ is a preacher of good news. This good news is for the *poor*, the *captive*, the *blind*, the *oppressed*, the *slave* and *debtor* – the year of the Lord's favour being the Jewish year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10), when all debts were annulled, all slaves set free. We must avoid over-spiritualising these verses, reading them through an evangelical lens, making them only speak in eternal and spiritual terms of spiritual poverty,

spiritual blindness, spiritual oppression and spiritual imprisonment, from which we are set free by the preaching of the spiritual gospel. Certainly there is this spiritual evangelical tone here, but there is also a more down-to-earth, practical sense, seen when Jesus actually physically healed the blind, fed the hungry, and sent the poor and the outcast away rejoicing.

Christ does this, praise his name. However, while a spiritual and eternal interpretation is right and proper, and we must also take into account Christ's signs and wonders to set free and heal, a socio-economic political interpretation must not be overlooked or exorcised from this text. Nolland says: 'Jesus is no social reformer and does not address himself in any fundamental way to the political structure of the world, but he is deeply concerned with the literal, physical needs of men (Acts 10:38) as with their directly spiritual needs.'[3]

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus promises the disciples that the same Spirit that anointed his ministry would anoint theirs – presumably with similar effect. Herman Waetjen, in his commentary on Jesus' discourse in John 16:7f, notes that the Spirit of God will continue Jesus' ministry in and through the disciples, the Church:

> As long as Jesus was in the world, present in its social reconstruction of reality, his deeds and his words manifested the realities of God's justice . . . By going to the Father and sending the Paraclete to unite with all disciples, Jesus is replacing his works of justice and healing with theirs. All who persist in the world and its structures of alienation will be exposed and convicted by the manifestation of God's justice as it will be actualised by the disciples.[4]

The Spirit-filled early Church loved its neighbour body and soul

In his sermon in Acts 2:14–21, Peter says that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28f. What is outstanding is that the Spirit of God, who formerly anointed the elite – prophets, priests and kings – would now anoint *all flesh.* This underlines the universal trans-cultural gifting, heralding the astonishing news that *sons and daughters, young and old, male and female slaves* will all exhibit the Spirit. The new epoch of the Spirit, the new community of the Spirit, is marked by its radical discontinuity with existing hierarchical culture; the same Spirit is received by all – God is not sexist, racist, intellectualist, ageist. The Spirit is equalising, liberating and empowering – especially for women or slaves – in receiving the Spirit they become equals!

In the early days of the outpouring of the Spirit in the 1906 Pentecostal Revival, the congregation gathered in an old warehouse at Azusa Street.

The main pastor was the son of a black slave, William Seymour. At every meeting black and white, women and men, young and old, sophisticated and illiterate, all sat together, worshipped together, met God together and received the Spirit together. These cultural and racial differences were 'washed away in the blood'.[5] It was a renewal of Pentecost, a foretaste of heaven, but a sign spoken against. Indeed, much of the opposition this movement faced was from the Church who were indignant that men and women, high and low, white and black, were regarded as equals and sat together as equals on the church's wooden benches! Often that which God orchestrates the world hates.

The early Church, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel, but was also deeply concerned to feed the poor and tend the needs of the widows and orphans for whom there were no social services or state benefits (Acts 6:1; 24:17, Galatians 2:10; James 1:27). In a Greco-Roman culture run on slavery, the Church modelled a radical alternative where slaves were treated with dignity and even as brothers and sisters, and slavery even used as a metaphor for sin (1 Timothy 1:10 – see also Philemon; Ephesians 6:5–9).

In Philippians 2:1f, Paul exhorts the Church with a beautiful concept, relating union with Christ to filling of the Spirit and caring for others: 'So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy . . . Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others' (verse 4). In our society so often marked by an egocentric, self-centred, self-absorption, the radical nature of the work of the Spirit, flowing from union with Christ, is otherness – not other-worldliness, but tenderness for others in this world.

The Spirit-filled Church through the ages loved its neighbour body and soul

There are too many tragic evidences throughout the ages of the Church as oppressor, wed to political systems and seeking her own ends. However, often facing exigencies of rejection, misrepresentation, even persecution, the Spirit-led church of Christ has been marked by her mercy ministries, going to the outcast, poor and deprived, offering what she can by way of provisions, education and healthcare. The needy have always found the way to the Church's door and almost always found help. Throughout the medieval period, the Church collected tithes, a significant part earmarked

specifically for the poor – shelter offered, food and hospitality given to the traveller, medicine to the sick.

In the late eighteenth century, the ministry of the Wesleys and Whitfields birthed an evangelical movement in England, which inspired many to take up the cause of social reform. Stott says: 'Wesley was a preacher of the Gospel and a prophet of righteousness.'[6] Even in his eighties, Wesley could be seen walking the street collecting alms for the poor. He inspired the Clapham sect, who vigorously campaigned against slavery, drunkenness, gambling, immorality, animal sports, and on factory legislation and working conditions and ages. The eighteenth-century revivalist Charles Finney prophetically stated that 'the great business of the Church is to reform the world', and believed that if the Church failed to engage in social reform, she grieved the Holy Spirit and hindered revival.[7]

The Salvation Army arose in the nineteenth century. Their motto, reminiscent of Augustine's dictum, declared: 'Heart to God, hand to man', and they touched the heart of the Spirit of God, reaching out in acts of mercy and justice to the poor, underprivileged, outcast and abused: feeding the poor, housing the homeless, delivering the drunk, rescuing the prostitute and preaching Christ crucified. Their banner, 'Blood and Fire', shows their foundation was the cross and the Spirit, and this led them to preach the gospel and reach out to the broken. In his last speech, the Spirit-filled prophet and founder of the Army, General Booth, spoke these remarkable words summarising his ministry:

> While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight;
> While little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight;
> While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight;
> While there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets,
> While there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight –
> I'll fight to the very end.[8]

Booth did fight to the very end, as the Salvation Army continue to, in their Spirit-led gospel work.

Nineteenth-century liberal theology secularised the Spirit. Culture, nature, politics and institutions were seen as the work of the Spirit. This led to both a depersonalising of the Spirit and an over-contextualising of his presence, at times with disastrous consequences; the liberal Church supported the German military machine in both World Wars.

Liberals look at society as the canvas for God's kingdom work. Distancing themselves from a notion of sin as primarily personal transgression, and of the gospel as essentially individual salvation, they substitute 'good news' with 'good deeds'. Social justice and mercy ministries become a prime motif of the liberal tradition. Regrettably, Scripture has not always been held as the criterion for identifying and participating in how and where the Spirit is at work in culture, and there is little control over what may be deemed a righteous cause to support. The liberal movement has at times been in danger of identifying with certain causes and movements more influenced by Marxist ideology or contemporary moralities than scriptural authority.

Evangelicals have, understandably at times, reacted negatively and retreated into a gospel of personal salvation, preaching focus, divorcing this from the 'social gospel' of justice and compassion, which they have seen as an abstraction. A corrective to the uncritical social liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was countered by a powerful evangelical theology of the word in the twentieth century – re-establishing Scripture as the source and norm of all our doing. From this foundation of a theology of the word, we must find a right theology of the world.

Holy Spirit renewal brings God's heart for the needy to the Church

In the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement, with its focus on the power of the Spirit has offered up some remarkable illustrations of Spirit-led mercy ministry. Minnie Adams is known for her influential and powerful pamphlet 'The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire', which opened up doors for ministry and revival in Chile. But she combined a full-time ministry in evangelism among unreached people groups, with a ministry to orphans and widows. One of Pentecostalism's founding fathers, A. B. Simpson, established a pioneering missionary work, uniquely blending the proclamation of the gospel, the exercise of charismatic signs and wonders, and the care for the social conditions of the individual which he termed 'ministries of compassion'. He said:

> There is room, not only for the worship of God and teaching of sacred truth and the evangelisation of the lost, but also for every phase of practical philanthropy and usefulness. These may be, in perfect keeping with the simple ardour and dignity of the Church of God, the past aggressive work for the masses and the evident welcome for every class of sinful men; the ministry of healing of the sick and suffering administered in the name of Jesus, the most complete provision for charitable relief, workshops for the unemployed, homes for the

orphaned, shelters for the helpless, refuge for the inebriates, the father and the helpless. And there is now work which will be more glorifying to God than a church that will embrace just such features and completeness.[9]

Baptist theologian Molly Marshall suggests that the twentieth-century movements of liberation and justice such as civil rights and women's rights in the US were suffused with the Spirit's power. While we must be cautious to say, 'this is that', it is undeniable that many of the foremost activists in these movements were people motivated by powerful Christian convictions:

The Spirit as God's radical immanence breathes through all structures – political, educational, scientific and so on. Nothing is too secular for the Spirit's winnowing work. Moreover, there is no special matrix where the Spirit can work in an unhindered way; the Spirit strains to find breathing room there as well.[10]

In the second half of the twentieth century the so-called charismatic renewal movement sought a personal experience of the Spirit who would renew their faith and bring an immediacy of God in his power and love. In the early days, this was very much a movement of personal piety as individuals met God for themselves and pursued various charisms.

Tom Smail wrote longingly and prophetically in the 1970s of his desire to see the renewal of the Spirit become a ministry of mercy and compassion, rather than introspective and indulgent, enjoying the Spirit for our own sake:

On the one hand there are charismatic Christians who constantly seek the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but who have yet to show how willing they are to become involved in God's liberating activity in the world. On the other hand there are social activist Christians who want to liberate the oppressed without receiving the Messianic Spirit who alone will enable them to do so effectively. Oh for the day when the charismatics become liberators and the Liberators become charismatic – because Jesus was both. It is within this context of Spirit anointed servanthood that sends you to others to set them free on every level, that the charismatic dimension of the gospel and the right exercise of the gifts of the spirit can alone be properly understood and healthily experienced.[11]

I believe such a combination is now happening, and increasingly we see the Church touched by the wind of the Spirit, touched by his heart for the poor, the needy, the outcast and matters of justice and social reform. Mark Stibbe however observes:

In the final analysis, any pneumatology or doctrine of the Holy Spirit which is purely concerned with the work of the Spirit in the Church, or worse still, in us as individual Christians, is hopelessly myopic. The Holy Spirit is concerned not only with our own liberation, but also with the liberation of societies, cultures, nature and indeed the whole cosmos.[12]

Conclusion

Long ago Archbishop Temple said that the Church is the only organisation that exists for the benefits of its non-members. The so-called 'social gospel' is the Church outside its hallowed gates, existing for the non-members, seeking to bring the good news to a broken world at the structural and personal level, feeding the poor, protesting against injustice, empowering the weak, identifying with suffering, tending creation. It works in perfect partnership with the Church's evangelism, proclaiming the redeeming gospel and charismatic ministry, demonstrating the power of God in restoring signs and wonders. The *motive* varies: for some the explicit mandate of Scripture, for others the compulsion of internal compassion, for others indignation at evil, for others to model Christ. For some the *premise* may be to see God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, for others to resist the ravages of sin, to bind the broken world, hasten heaven, love one's neighbour as oneself, or do unto others as they would do unto Christ. But it is all the work of the Spirit who scribed Scripture, who inspired Christ, who cares and would have us there for the world. The Spirit created the world and everything in it, saw that it was good and then saw that it went rotten, and is tirelessly abroad in his world seeking to redeem it. If we keep in step with the Spirit, we will find that our centre of reality is not internal but external, not just our blessing, not just our sanctification, not just our reconciliation, but the world's.

I have approached this concept with rather broad brush strokes and have deliberately not suggested specific areas where the Spirit is at work today in our culture. The Spirit blows where he will, but always where people are ill, in body, mind and spirit. Our responsibility, in whatever context we find ourselves, is to be open to the Spirit instructing and empowering us to participate in that place to love our neighbour as ourselves and allow God's righteous love to work through us by his Spirit:

> God sends the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God's just, peaceable and loving rule in the world. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of justice and peace. The church in worship proclaims, receives and enacts reconciliation in Jesus Christ and commits itself to strive for justice and peace in its own life and in the world.[13]

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1 'Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', in *Theology Today*.

2 Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, p. 565.

3 *Luke*, vol. 1, p. 197.

4 *Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*, p. 360.

5 Evan Smith, *Booth the Beloved*, pp. 123–124.

6 *Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 3.

7 Stott, p. 5.

8 General William Booth, Salvation Army Tulsa website.

9 Klaus, 'Compassion Rooted in the Gospel that Transforms', *Enrichment Journal* website.

10 *Joining the Dance*, p. 130.

11 *Giving Gift*, p. 104.

12 Quoted in Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millenium*, p. 265.

13 'Peacemaking and Social Justice', Presbyterian Church USA website.

7

THE SPIRIT WHO CONSTRAINS AND CONVICTS

Introduction

A while ago, I found myself having lunch with an Oxford Regius Professor of Philosophy and Theology – not a usual feature in my diary. Holding one of the most prestigious chairs in the academic world, she is a scholar of international repute – as well as engaging company and conversation. I asked her, 'To what extent is the Holy Spirit active in the world outside the Church's proclamation, fellowship, sacraments and ministry?' She was very quick to respond asserting the Spirit's activity everywhere in most things. As I pressed her, she was more specific: 'The Spirit is at work in my atheist colleague who nevertheless is passionate about matters of justice; the Spirit is at work in my scientist colleague who is pursuing theorums of physics which hold the universe together; the Spirit is at work in the composer in creating a beautiful symphony.' This scholar, also an ordained priest, reflects the view perhaps more commonly associated with the liberal tradition than the evangelical – which somewhat restricts the view of the Spirit's ministry to the world, individual regeneration and the Church. Our question is, is she right?

Beyond creating and sustaining the universe, beyond bringing people to new life in Christ, does the Spirit have a general role, not directly related to salvation? Does the Spirit inspire outside the Church as well as inside? Does the Spirit operate in individuals without their owning Christ? Does something have to be obviously and self-consciously 'unto Christ' to be 'from the Spirit'? Bezalel and Oholiab were inspired by the Spirit to create beautiful objects for the Tabernacle (Exodus 31:1f) but they were within the

elect people of God – does the same Spirit give the same gifts to others outside the family of faith to create the beautiful? The outstanding Renaissance Christian sculptor and artist Michelangelo may have been inspired and creatively gifted by the Spirit and his work was largely self-consciously 'religious' – but Michelangelo was undeniably influenced by pre-Christian Hellenistic sculptors' methods and composition. Was the Spirit who equipped Michelangelo also equipping the Roman or Greek sculptors?

Milton, Bunyan and Shakespeare wrote remarkable works of literature. Bunyan and Milton were self-consciously Christian and may be regarded as somewhat 'inspired' in their writings, but Shakespeare, probably the greatest among these, was less obviously Christian. But his insights into human nature and his ability to convey them, arguably produced the greatest corpus of literature ever written. Were his literary gifts somehow faintly touched by the Spirit?

Bach was clearly a man of deep spirituality and Christian piety – we might perhaps say he was gifted by God's Spirit. Mozart was no Christian, yet he claimed that he heard his music from God and then wrote it down. Was that the Spirit? Newton may have been a man of religious conviction, and we might say his insights were inspired, but Einstein was no Christian, yet he stated that he only traced lines that flow from God. Was that the Spirit? Martin Luther King was a Christian minister whose passion for justice could be ascribed to the empowering presence of the Spirit. Mahatma Ghandi rejected Christianity, yet his cause and his methods paralleled Luther King, for whom he was a major inspiration. Was the Holy Spirit working in Ghandi? Is the Spirit at work in individuals in society without their awareness? Traditionally, liberal tradition has answered with a resounding 'yes', while the evangelicals have responded with a more equivocal 'unlikely'.

When a Christian lays hands on a patient with TB and prays and they are healed, we may say that is the work of the Spirit. But is it the same Spirit at work if an atheist scientist invents a cure for TB, which is administered by an atheist doctor, and brings total healing? If not the Spirit's work 'behind the scenes', to whom do we credit it – man? Does a government bill bringing social transformation and good to millions have to be brought by a born-again tongues-speaking Christian for it to be the work of the Spirit?

We must admit that there is sparse direct scriptural evidence to support a thesis of the dynamic personal work of the Spirit outside the community of faith. Theologically, we want to safeguard the notion of the work of the Spirit connecting to the work of Christ, to maintain the link between the doctrine of creation and salvation. But we must ask: if we see within the Church, within Scripture, the works of the Spirit (justice, beauty, love, a desire for holiness, etc.), which we then see replicated outside the Church, can we also ascribe those to the dynamic effect of the Spirit? If justice looks the same in inspired Scripture and secular culture, what is the cause of the latter, if not the Spirit? Is the activity of the Spirit limited to the Christian who self-consciously seeks to be the instrument of the Spirit? If we believe only a Christian can evidence giftings by the Spirit, from what other source comes that which looks like the kind of thing God would do? Ultimately, our options boil down to three things: first, it is the work of the demonic – a counterfeit of evil that looks good; second, it is merely down to human ability, which in particular individuals has evolved certain specialities; third, it is the latent trace of *imago Dei* from creation. I am inclined to see all those 'giftings' as the ongoing, energising, creative work of the Spirit – preserving and beautifying his world: 'Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights' (James 1:17).

Theological observations

The Spirit of love and justice

The Roman Catholic scholar Gaybba has said that God is defined by love. Whenever and wherever love is evident, we are touching or being touched by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Love. He believes that all *social action* which seeks to transform lives for good is the result of an impulse of the Spirit at work in the world:

> When such action flows from love, then there is also present *gratia gratum faciens* – the grace that sanctifies . . . The Holy Spirit's presence throughout history moves people to love people, moves people to care for people, to respect their dignity, to work for liberation.[1]

While I want to say 'yes' to this, drawing on such crucial texts as 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4:7, I cannot agree wholeheartedly. *What may look like love may be selfish altruism*. Love for the other may have the 'trace of the Spirit' but ultimately, true love is loving God and keeping his commandments (Exodus 20:6; Daniel 9:4).

The Spirit of constraint and provision

The doctrine of Common Grace is not currently fashionable, but has a long pedigree in the Reformed tradition, and helps us to comprehend God's work in the world in a general way. Augustine claimed there is a dichotomy between *sin* and *grace*: man has no virtues, no ability to respond to God or do good in his depraved nature. The medieval Church developed an emphasis on *nature* and *grace*: sin has corrupted man's nature, but not to the extent that its original *imago Dei* creation could not elicit good. Calvin said man was utterly reprobate and depraved in nature at every point and utterly dependent on God's sovereign saving grace. However, he believed a general *Common Grace* worked alongside a particular *Saving Grace*.[2] This was not grace towards salvation, but for society – the activity of the Spirit:

> . . . to curb the destructive power of sin, maintains in a measure the moral order of the universe, thus making an orderly life possible, distributes in varying degrees gifts and talents among men, promotes the developments of science and art and showers untold blessings upon the children of men.[3]

Princeton divine Charles Hodge offered this classic definition:

> . . . the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of life in all its forms, is present with every human mind, enforcing truth, restraining from evil, exciting to good, and imparting wisdom or strength, when, where, and in what measure seemeth to Him good.[4]

In 1924, the Christian Reformed Church adopted what was known as the 'Three Points of Common Grace'. Drawing on texts from the Psalms (81:11f), Genesis (6:3), Acts (7:42), Romans (1:24; 26, 28), and 2 Thessalonians (2:6f), in Point Two they stated: 'God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible.' The Holy Spirit was understood to be operative in common grace, apart from regeneration, immediately after Adam and Eve fell, and continues until Christ returns.[5]

The Holy Spirit is abroad in the world in grace in many and varied ways. He provides for human needs and everything required to sustain life through the provision of food and water, through the animal and natural world. He is the inspiration behind social structures which hold back anarchy and evil, maintaining social order and political governance. He inspires laws to protect and maintain stability, he provides aesthetic inspiration to beautify the world. He restrains the satanic powers of evil, not

allowing them to totally dominate and exterminate. All this because he loves the world he created, and because it is the context which must sustain human life whom he seeks to redeem through the gospel of Christ. It is thus a doctrine in pneumatology that usefully holds together creation and redemption within.

The Spirit of Prevenient Grace

Whereas Common Grace is generally a Reformed doctrine, Prevenient Grace has been an Arminian one. General grace is related to the doctrine of salvation through broad brush strokes – concerned as it is with the general sustaining of creation and culture as the backdrop for salvation. Prevenient Grace is related to the doctrine of salvation more particularly and precisely, concerned as it is with the preparation of individuals for the gospel. General grace relates to the world, creation and society as a whole, Prevenient Grace to the individual. This doctrine, promoted by John Wesley, asserted that the Holy Spirit 'goes before' the gospel ministry, readying individual hearts to hear and respond. Whereas Calvinists taught about 'irresistible grace', whereby the elect sinner is brought to Christ on the basis of divine decree, this doctrine asserts that the Spirit universally operates to prepare and move sinners into a place where they might freely decide for Christ. Whether through direct conviction of sin (Acts 2:37), special revelation (Acts 10:1f), influencing an individual's circumstances to get them to a place where they could hear the gospel (Acts 16:30), or through engendering a desire for truth or God (Acts 8:26; 17:4) – all are types of Prevenient Grace, whereby the Spirit influences the individual's situation and circumstance, internal and external, that they might hear of and respond to Christ.[6]

The Puritan scholar John Owen offers a lengthy treatment on this subject and uses Augustine's testimony from the *Confessions* as an example of the Spirit evidently directing the course of his life, bringing a fugitive sinner to a place of conviction and personal crisis where he or she is intellectually and existentially ready for the gospel.[7] Owen suggests that the Spirit's Prevenient Grace may be manifested through sudden disaster (Jonah 1:5), affliction (Job 33:19f), remarkable deliverance (2 Kings 5:15), observing godly conduct in others (1 Peter 3:1f), or direct conviction of sin. The Spirit's guidance leads to a questioning, which may cause a hardening or a protracted internal struggle, as the Spirit fights with the desires of the flesh, and there is often a period of perplexity or distress when one is torn

between the conviction of sin and the corruption of the flesh. For Owen as a Calvinist, God's elective purpose wins, for Wesley the Arminian, human free will chooses. But either way, both traditions see the Spirit as dynamically preparing the ground for the gospel. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this gospel groundwork I know is found in a book titled, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, by Don Richardson. This study reveals how, throughout the centuries, across numerous cultures, civilised and otherwise, there have been motifs, words, customs, rituals, even titles for God, which cohere directly with the gospel disclosure in Scripture. When the gospel has come to these peoples, it is as if they have been waiting expectantly for generation after generation for a word of Christ; they are a people 'prepared', they have an immediate point of contact with the gospel, and in many cases have immediately accepted Christ. An anthropologist or Durkheimian sociologist might see these customs and rituals as pragmatic religious social constructs of the human who is by nature a religious animal. However, their mysterious appearance, their coherence with revelation, and the people's willingness to embrace Christianity suggest these motifs are preparatory and prophetic, evidences of Prevenient Grace. God was preparing the ground for the gospel.

While Barth and his followers argued that the Spirit is only active in the word of God when preached or read from Scripture, most Christian theologians see God's activity beyond this sphere. God is always desiring union with humankind and actively revealing himself and drawing us to himself through many and diverse ways. God is not hiding and only found through intellectual deduction by the clever – no, by his Spirit he is wilfully and freely revealing himself and reaching out to his beloved world.

The Spirit of revelation

Barth focused the revealing work of the Spirit on the word of God recorded in Scripture (the canon), announced by a preacher (*kerygma*, the noun form of the Greek *kerusso* meaning 'I preach'), and heard and received by the individual. However, most theologians extend this revealing work of the Spirit beyond the event around the word of God per se and believe he is dynamically revealing himself through many diverse ways – through culture, creation and conscience, as well as through the canon of Scripture and the kerygma.

How common is this general revelation? J. V. Taylor says, 'The Holy Spirit speaks to the man in the street as well as to the man in the pew.'[8]

- *Kant* said that an innate sense of *morality*, right and wrong, leads us to believe in an absolute moral referent who underwrites justice, whether in this life or the next.
- *Kierkegaard* spoke of a universal sense of *anxiety*, whereby humankind is compelled to despair or driven to find rest in God.
- *Rahner* and *Richard Hooker* suggest that *beauty* causes us to transcend our immediate context and touch the divine in awe and wonder.
- *Otto* suggests that we have a profound sense of *spirituality* – *Mysterium Tremendum*, awe before the unknown God which makes us religious.
- *Lewis* said we are all filled with *appetency* – deep cravings which are unmet and unsatisfied in anything the world offers in material terms. This desire directs us towards God.
- *Schleiermacher* spoke of a universal feeling of *dependency* on a superior being – who is God.
- *Pannenberg* spoke of human *exocentricity* – the drive in humankind that propels us to transcend the limits of our symbiotic eco / social system and reach out beyond, to God.

There are within the matrix of human existence numerous 'points of contact' between God and man – could these be activated by the dynamic presence of the Spirit? The great reformer and theologian John Calvin understood the Spirit to be energetically active in revealing and wooing humankind to God in several ways, paralleling and partnering the word, which alone saves. The Spirit brings the knowledge of God as creator, though not as redeemer, which is found through the Word.

Rice's doctorate on Calvin's pneumatology[9] shows how revelation by the Spirit is operative.

- It is *two-dimensional* – the Spirit constantly dynamically awakens in our sinful minds the revelation of himself in static creation; this revelation may be rejected but it cannot be resisted.
- This revelation is *universal* – all men, not just the Elect, receive it.
- It is *rational* – truths are imparted by the Spirit to our mind.

- It is *cordial* – tugging at our hearts and creating a feeling of need for a majestic God.
- It is *personal* – coming to the individual soul of man.
- It is *moral*, not vague, and abstract but specific and existential.
- It is *continual* – the Spirit renews his revealing work again and again, despite our hiding or pretence at ignorance.

For Calvin, this Spirit's revealing work does not lead to salvation, but condemnation – for man has failed to respond to it. Only when the word comes do we really see and understand the revelation that we have been drugged by sin while being drawn by grace.

The Spirit and the religions

Religion is the product of man's response to numerous revelations – man's religious impulse is partly a 'yes' to the Spirit's impulse in man. However, sin and the absence of special revelation will always cause this to become an aberration (Romans 1:18–25). Thus Taylor:

> The eternal Spirit has been at work in all ages and all cultures making men aware and evoking their response and always the One to whom he was pointing and bearing witness was the Logos, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.[10]

I agree with Clark Pinnock when he says: 'One can be sensitive to the Spirit among people of other faiths without minimising real and crucial differences between them.'[11] However, Pinnock escapes Scripture when he posits that this general revelation by the Spirit is somehow a saving knowledge.[12] Yes, the Spirit is intimately involved in the very questioning and questing after God among the religions, but the details, doctrines and devotions which do not cohere with redemption and revelation of God in Christ alone show structurally the absence of the Spirit. He is ever the Spirit of Christ and his work can allow for no sharing of Christ's divine supremacy with any other divine. The Spirit of general revelation at best shows our guilt and evokes a desire for God.

Scriptural indications

Not all agree with the direction this chapter has been taking, that of seeing a non-salvific, general universal work of the Spirit in creation and culture. Barth infamously titled a vociferous pamphlet 'Nein' in response to

Brunner's leanings towards such matters. Griffith Thomas boldly stated: 'Nothing is more striking than the simple fact that not a single passage can be discovered in the New Testament which refers to the direct action of the Spirit in the world.'[13] He is not without a point, though there are texts that point us in the right direction.

Genesis 6:3

'. . . the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever . . . but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." '

It is uncertain whether the hundred and twenty years refers to the maximum life span of man or to the years before judgement and flood come. If the latter, as I prefer (Noah lived to be 950), then it demonstrates the preserving grace of God, the Spirit holding back judgement and chaos which sin invites. Until then, he abides with humanity, and gives opportunity for Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to repent (2 Peter 2:5).

John 16:8

'When the Spirit comes, he will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgement.'

This text must be read universally, chronologically and christologically. Universally – because the scope of the Spirit's work is the whole world – not just Israel / Palestine. Chronologically, because this tense is future and refers to the Spirit coming in a new way, post-Pentecost. Christologically, because the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement must be seen in relation to the person and work of Christ.

Mark 3:29

'. . . whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness'.

In its textual context this blasphemy appears initially to credit Christ's miraculous powers to the devil, rather than to the Spirit who anointed him. In rejecting Christ the Pharisees are actually rejecting the Spirit who is pointing them to the anointed Christ. Blasphemy against the Spirit is rejecting the witness and work of the Spirit who glorifies Christ. If we refuse to accept the Spirit's grace-filled witness to Christ in its *prevenient form* – convicting us of our sin and wooing us to the love of God, and in its *particular form* – in the preaching of the gospel – how can we be forgiven?

Every sin can be forgiven, except rejecting the forgiveness that is offered through Christ.

The unpardonable sin or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit describes the ultimate spiritual state or condition of a sinner, rather than a single act of sin. The official stance of the Assemblies of God (AOG) is: 'The act described in the Gospels, witnesses to a final state in a process of rebellion on the part of those who have continually rejected the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ.'[14] I agree. This danger of blasphemy is not in the particulars of the Pharisees' rejection of Christ's miracles, but in rejecting the witnessing, wooing and warning work of the Spirit – whether experienced through Christ's ministry two thousand years ago, or through the Spirit's work today. Let us not miss the point in relation to our wider theme in this chapter – the Spirit is witnessing abroad in the world, and woe betide those who reject him.

Acts 7:51f

'You always resist the Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.'

Stephen's sermon accused the Pharisees and religious leaders of being just as stiff-necked and stubborn as their forefathers, who also grieved the Holy Spirit, who had been present in power and provision to them.

Thus, the Spirit was at work in Israel (pre-Christ and the Church's witness). These current religious leaders '*always* resist the Spirit', implying more than their current ill-treatment of Stephen (even his imminent murder), but indicates a repeated resistance to the ongoing activity of the Spirit working in, wooing and warning them.

Romans 2:14f

'The Gentiles who do not have the Law, do by nature what the law requires . . . they show that the law is written on their hearts.'

Paul is probably relying on a Greek tradition of the universal possession of an unwritten law on human hearts. This formed the basis of personal conscience and the constructing of social rules – generally held morals on issues such as murder, marriage and honouring parents. These may be seen to correspond with the special revealed law of God. If the Spirit created man, presumably he created this deposit of moral truth, and despite the

numbing sin which obscures it, and man's inability to live up to it, nevertheless this moral deposit continues to benefit society.

Conclusion

Scripture does not clearly state that the Spirit is universally at work in social, ethical, political and aesthetic structures. However, it does posit the universal presence of the Spirit as the source and sustenance of all life, and more particularly it reveals the nature and work of the Spirit in Christ and the Church. From these we may rightly deduce that where we see such Christ-like qualities as sacrifice, self-giving, love, justice, peace, grace, truth and beauty, they may be inspired by the Spirit.

We cannot, however, be too positive. The depravity of sin in humankind remains. The Spirit's general activity in the world in no way undermines the necessity for saving grace. I hope that I have demonstrated that the *good, loving, beautiful* and the *just*, are not posited as virtues of humanity per se, but as Spirit working through humanity. These virtues have God, not humanity, as their source. Despite evidence of goodness in human behaviour, people remain desperately sinful and in need of salvation. Following the doctrines of Common Grace and Prevenient Grace, we see the universal work of the Spirit as a grace-filled preparatory role for the gospel.

The doctrine of the universal operation of the Spirit has in the last two hundred years been championed more by liberal theology than evangelical. Some fear that to adopt it too readily might lead to adopting more liberal doctrines uncritically. But this is not a liberal doctrine per se – it is a biblical one. The evangelical must embrace whatever God is doing wherever and can do so without 'neurosis of contamination', or the erosion of core doctrines. Indeed, we might say that our very honouring of truths held outside our tradition may cause those on the outside to embrace some more of our evangelical values!

In suggesting that the Spirit may be at work in beauty, science, arts and politics, we must also recognise that one man's meat is another man's poison. Is there any way of knowing whether something is Spirit-inspired, or from the flesh, or worse? So-called justice for one might be immoral licence to another. In science, a breakthrough with positive life-enhancing results may have initially been predicated on questionable moral procedures. What are the constraints or criteria for discerning? We are left

with Scripture from which we may deduce certain principles from the pattern of the Spirit's work – but we are faced with differences even at the level of interpretation.

If I perceive that the Spirit is operative in all things 'wise and wonderful', then my response must be to see God as greater than I had previously understood, and worthy of more praise and glory. It enlarges the sphere of God's activity and his glory! In no way does this diminish or deflect from the work of the Spirit in salvation. Some fear it dilutes it or detracts from it – it may not enhance it, but it does frame it. It is yet another evidence of the graciousness of our God.

The Spirit is the Spirit of life and love and truth. Whenever we find these we have the presence of the Spirit. But the Spirit is also pre-eminently the Spirit who testifies that Jesus came in the flesh from God (1 John 4:1f). Every spirit that does not recognise this is no Holy Spirit. In our understanding of the *universality of the Spirit*, let us never lose the *uniqueness of Christ* as the world's revealer of God and the world's reconciler with God.

J. V. Taylor said: 'To think deeply about the Holy Spirit is a bewildering, tearing exercise'[15] – nevertheless, *Venite Spiritus Sanctus*.

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1 *Spirit of Love*, pp. 265f.

2 McNeill, 2.2.15–17.

3 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 434.

4 Ibid.

5 'Common Grace', Christian Reformed Church website.

6 Hartman, 'Prevenient Grace', IMARC website.

7 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, pp. 225–238.

8 *Go-Between God*, p. 182.

9 See Ponsonby, *Barth*, pp. 182–186.

10 *Go-Between God*, p. 191.

11 *Flame of Love*, p. 207.

12 Ibid., p. 187.

13 *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 186.

14 'Unpardonable Sin', Assemblies of God website.

15 *Go-Between God*, p. 179.

PART THREE

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN

8

THE SPIRIT OF REGENERATION

Introduction

In the previous few chapters, we considered the relationship that the Spirit has with the world. We posited a new term, *Panmetatheism* – God *with* all – a definition which sought to hold together both the immanence and the transcendence between creator and creature. We wanted to safeguard the ontological distinction while affirming the very real, intimate relations. God remains God, the creature remains creature, but the Spirit, the executive member of the godhead, unites the two, sustaining and infusing all life with his sovereign grace. We now turn our attention to the relationship between the Christian believer and God. *Panmetatheism* no longer conveys the depth of the relationship which the Christian enters into through faith in Christ and reception of the Spirit. The apostles spoke of the Christian individually and corporately as being a household, spiritual home, a temple where God lives (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Peter 2:5).

As well as sustaining creation as the theatre for the great romance between God and humankind, the Spirit is abroad in the world, seeking to bridge the divide and reconcile the divorce between sinful humankind and the Holy God. The Spirit is divine matchmaker, planning the union and preparing the wedding. In Chapter 3 we saw how the Spirit was actively involved as high priest, offering Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Hebrews 9:14), then ushering Christ as representative humanity into the presence of the Father, there to sit at the right hand of God on our behalf. Sin and rebellion has rendered mankind a brute beast, ignorant and idolatrous (Daniel 4:28–37; Romans 1:21f), but God's Prevenient Grace, the Spirit's preparatory work, turns the mind and desire of men to God:

‘setting eternity in our hearts’ (Ecclesiastes 3:11) – an aching and a longing for God. The Spirit draws men to Christ, convicting them of sin, God’s righteousness and their future judgement (John 16:8f). The Spirit anoints the preaching of the word (Acts 1:8; 4:8), the gospel of Christ, and anoints the heart of the listener, joining the two. The Church is divided over whether this Prevenient Grace and the gospel offer is particular, i.e. for the Elect alone and therefore irresistible, or whether it is universal in its outreach and volitional in its acceptance.

In the *salvation schema*, the Holy Spirit applies to the individual the benefits and effects of the work of Christ. The law of God written in Scripture (Romans 3:21), and on the heart of humanity (Romans 2:14f), stands as an unequivocal indictment against human sin (Romans 3:5–19, 23). The righteous God condemns and directs his wrath to the punishment of unrighteous sinful man to satisfy all justice. But the gracious God freely justifies sinful man (Romans 3:24), not by annulling his justice, but by satisfying it through the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ (Romans 3:25–26). Jesus becomes the substitutionary sacrifice, in our place, for our sins – the propitiation which turns away God’s wrath, the expiation which covers our sin. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Romans 3:30), we inherit the merit of Christ’s death: first, *justification* – no longer condemned but acquitted; second, *reconciliation* – no longer estranged from God but brought near; third, *vivification* – no longer dead but alive for ever.

God’s Holy Spirit is both the *executor* and *guarantor* of this momentous event. The Westminster Confession states the Elect are not justified until the Holy Spirit in due time applies Christ to them (Romans 5:5; 8:1–11). Through faith and baptism, we *receive* the Spirit (Acts 2:38), who not only *accompanies* us but *resides in* us (John 14:17). The Spirit *leads* us and *lives* in us (Romans 8:14–15); he *testifies with* our spirit that we are his children (Romans 8:16); he strengthens *our inner being, dwelling in our hearts* by faith (Ephesians 3:16f); the Spirit *joins with our spirit* (1 Corinthians 6:17); we become the *temple of God* (1 Corinthians 6:19). More than merely an ‘accompanying presence’, he is the indwelling, abiding, remaining presence – he is God, who sets up home in us, who unites with us at the core of our being (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The Spirit of regeneration

Regeneration is the theological term given to define the comprehensive work of the Spirit in making us new. It is the religious event that constitutes our whole new existence through the action of the Spirit in us on the basis of Christ's death for us, whereby we are rescued from darkness and brought into light (1 Peter 2:9); redeemed from the bondage and penalty of sin (Ephesians 1:7); brought from death to life (Romans 6:13); changed from being slaves to sons (Galatians 4); made a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17); born again (John 3:1–8); partake of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4); become joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:12–17); seated with God in heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6). Hallelujah!

The very core of our existence is effected – our past, present, future, body, mind, heart, soul and spirit. J. Rodman Williams says: 'This is the greatest miracle that any person can ever experience for while one remains the same person, he is born anew in the whole of his being. It happens by the agency of the Spirit of the living God.'[1] This work transforms us into a *new creature*, receiving a *new nature* and given a *new life*.

Regeneration in biblical presentation

The term regeneration comes from the Latin meaning 'rebirth'. This word in the New Testament, *paliggenesias*, occurs infrequently. It is in Matthew 19:28, referring to an eschatological vista, and in Titus 3:5, describing an individual saving event. However, its semantic equivalents are found more widely, especially in John 3:1–8 and 1 Peter 1:3. In ancient Greek it conveyed *cosmic renewal*; in Hellenistic Judaism it referred to *return and restoration after exile*; it was also used in mystery religions for the transmigration of the soul to a higher level.

The Old Testament prophetically pointed to regeneration: 'I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes . . .' (Ezekiel 11:19); '. . . I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes' (36:27). A day was foreseen when individuals would receive the Spirit within who would transform their spirits, and enable them to conform to the law of God. In Ezekiel 37, the prophet is shown a valley littered with the dry bones of the dead – he is asked: 'can these bones live?' and wisely replies: 'O Lord, only you know.' The prophet is called to prophesy life – and as he does so, the bones come together, flesh and sinews are placed on the bones and then the breath of life

enters them and they arise like an army. More than just a prophetic word of hope and return to a destitute exiled Israel, it speaks of the dead in sin who will be made alive in Christ by the Spirit of God: in verse 13f 'you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live . . .' This text was only partially fulfilled for Israel as a nation when they returned to the land – spiritually, the raising to life, the receiving of the Spirit is only fully fulfilled for the believer in Christ at regeneration.

Jesus spoke directly about the need for regeneration: in John 3:3–5 he said: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.' In verse 7: 'You must be born anew.'

Jesus was speaking these words to Nicodemus, a teacher of the law and a leader of Israel. On the basis of Abrahamic election and descent he, like his nation, would have believed himself to be already part of God's inner circle. Conformity to the law expressed and upheld the Mosaic covenant. Theirs were the prophets, the patriarchs, the promises and the place. But Nicodemus sees in Christ's ministry and hears in his teaching something attractive, yet elusive. He comes at night, when Christ is not too preoccupied, and when he is unlikely to be seen, to test this prophet Jesus. Before he has hardly uttered a sentence and not even got to his question, Jesus extends him a surprising invitation.

The kingdom of God, God's eternal glorious reign may be seen and entered (in verses 3 and 5), but this happens not on the basis of preferential racial birth and descent as a Jew. God's kingdom comes to those who are reborn of God, not born of Abraham's seed per se. Nicodemus protests with a question about nature (verse 4): 'Can [a man] enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' Jesus corrects him by indicating the supernatural nature of this birth. In verse 6 he says: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' This kingdom-entering birth is through the Spirit (verse 8) – a heavenly, divine birth *from above*. This term (verse 7) from the Greek word *anothen*, carries both the sense of *above* and *again*; the double meaning is probably intentional – we are born *again* by being born *from above*.

Morris has observed that the perennial heresy of humanity is to think we can fit ourselves by our own efforts for God's kingdom.[2] In attempting

such, he falls flat on his face. We cannot achieve it or evolve to it – we must receive it, the Spirit must come and transform us within – regenerating, rebirthing, renewing, recreating. To speak of 'birth' speaks of a whole new start, a new beginning – as Calvin said, 'not the amendment of a part but the renewal of the whole nature'.[3] The Spirit / breath / *pneuma* which sustains natural life must revisit us in a qualitatively new way to enable spiritual life.

The tense employed is an aorist (similar to the preterite) passive – rebirth is not something we do, but something done to us, not part of an ongoing process, but something which happens at a point in time. As in nature there is a period of gestation before the moment of birth and the inhaling of life into the lungs when a child is born. Likewise, in spiritual life, there may be a period of gestation when the sinner is convicted of sin and compelled to draw near to Christ, but there is a point when we are 'born again', when the Spirit enters and our constitution is eternally changed. This spiritual work, by the Spirit, from above, fits the individual for heaven, for God.

Titus 3:5: 'he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.' In what may be an early hymn or creed (verses 4 to 6) Paul explains the gospel. Note its trinitarian structure: verses 4 and 5a concern the Father's motive, 5b and 6a the Spirit's ministry, while verse 6b concerns Jesus Christ the mechanism. That which the Father willed in goodness and loving kindness, which was purchased through the work of Jesus, is applied by the Spirit whereby we are, 'saved' (in verse 5), and 'justified . . . heirs in hope of eternal life' (verse 7). All this on the basis of divine mercy and grace, not our works of righteousness.

The Spirit is credited with creating this new status for us, in us. The phrase: '. . . the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit' may well parallel Jesus' comment to Nicodemus when he spoke of the need to be born of water and the Spirit. The water is an external symbol of the internal change wrought by the power of the Spirit cleansing our constitution and conscience from sin. Calvin, in his commentary on Titus, says that the Spirit regenerates us and makes us new creatures, but because his grace is invisible and hidden, a visible symbol of it is beheld in baptism.[4]

The pairing of regeneration (*paliggenesias*, meaning 'rebirth') and renewal (*anakainoseos*, meaning 'transformation') may indicate that regeneration looks to the ending of the old life whereas renewal points to

the formation of the new. In verse 5a, ‘he saved us’ demonstrates that salvation is accomplished (aorist punctiliar passive), underlining what we saw in John 3, that this is a work ‘from above’ and ‘accomplished’. He, God, is responsible for our salvation, not us. We do not rebirth or renew ourselves – God does it, he has done it. The term ‘renewal’ however may indicate the ongoing outworking of this past event in us. Elsewhere Paul says: ‘But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God’ (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Regeneration in historical debate

Berkhof offers what has become the classic Reformed definition:

> Regeneration consists in the implanting of the principle (i.e. the seed, source, fountainhead) of new spiritual life, in a radical change to the governing disposition of the soul, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gives birth to a life that moves in a Godward direction.[5]

I would want to tweak this statement by adding that the Holy Spirit not simply ‘influences’ this principle but is the very source of this ‘principle’ (the deposit, seed, generating germinating life), making his home in our spirit, from whence he seeks to govern and work the radical change to our souls (our mind, intellect, will, emotions) and bodies, which were previously predicated to flesh and sin.

Regeneration is definitive

It is a finished event. The closing lines from Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* speak of the change being wrought in the life of murderer and prisoner, Raskolnikov: ‘But now a new history commences: a story of the gradual renewing of a man, of his slow progressive regeneration, and change from one world to another – an introduction to the hitherto unknown realities of life.’

The description of regeneration here has much to commend it – a new history, life being renewed, transformed, change, leaving of an old life for a new one. But it differs from the biblical presentation on a crucial point. Dostoevsky’s mentions ‘gradual renewal’ and ‘slow progressive regeneration’. Pelagius the English heretic thought regeneration progressive, and historically Roman Catholics have believed it to be a gradual process. While we want to affirm the nature of the Christian life as

a journey of sanctification, the biblical witness is to regeneration being instantaneous. New birth and all it represents is an event in a moment when our disposition and destiny are changed. New birth is an accomplished fact, a state entered on the basis of faith and the act of God by the Spirit (1 Peter 1:3).

Though it anticipates a future inheritance and hope, regeneration is a completed event; nowhere does regeneration in Scripture appear to be partial or dependent on some add-on extra experience or infusion. The Fall brings about total depravity – sin touching every aspect of the human soul – so regeneration is all-pervasive. We do not need a second and subsequent baptism, filling, washing, or rebirthing to remove Adam's inheritance and receive Christ. We have it all – the Holy Spirit infuses the regenerative principle – he imparts our justification, reconciliation, salvation and redemption. Now are we the sons of God. We are regenerate – but the implications of that new status need working out. Colossians 3:3–10 speaks of our lives being hid with Christ in God positionally, but needing practically to put off the old self and put on the new self, like a butterfly shedding its chrysalis. Regeneration is a coming alive of our dead spirit to God – that which is born of Spirit is spirit, that which is born of flesh is flesh (John 3:6). But with the indwelling Holy Spirit co-joined with our spirit, regeneration – both positionally (we are reckoned by God as new creatures), and practically (we are constituted spiritually as new creatures) – takes effect, and we move in an instant from being carnally born to spiritually reborn (1 Corinthians 3:1). The Christian life is then a process of becoming what we are – transformed into the glorious likeness of Christ from that of the ignominious Adam (2 Corinthians 3:17f).

Watchman Nee rightly observes:

> Biblical regeneration is a birth by which the innermost part of man's being, the deeply hidden spirit, is renewed and indwelt by the Spirit of God. It requires time for the power of this new life to reach the outside: that is to be extended from the centre to the circumference.[6]

The length of time depends on the willingness of the regenerate believer to submit his sin-programmed flesh and soul to the work of the Spirit. Sadly, as Nee notes: 'the church is overstuffed with big babies',[7] carnal and unspiritual, living from the outside in, from the circumference not the centre of their spirit, where the Holy Spirit resides.

Regeneration is prospective

The Greek *palinggenesias* in both the Stoic and Jewish Hellenistic usage, usually had a sense of future hope and expectation: whether re-creation of new world cosmic order, or return from Israel. It was a word of expectancy, hope and future. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus uses it to describe the time and place of the *future* kingdom of Heaven at the renewal of all things.

Regeneration is an achieved fact, yet holds within it the prolepsis, the anticipation of the future. 1 Peter 1:3 says that because God has caused us to be born again, we have a hope and an inheritance that is kept for us in heaven. The writer to the Hebrews adds that we have already tasted of the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:4–5). Moltmann has reflected deeply on the experience of Spirit as the presence of eternity now. In *Theology of Hope* he says helpfully: 'regeneration or rebirth as new creation is christologically based, pneumatalogically accomplished and eschatologically orientated'. It is the emerging from this transient mortal life into life that is immortal and eternal. At rebirth, the power of eternity, the power of the age to come as the writer to the Hebrews puts it (Hebrews 6:4), touches time and transforms the regenerate person who lives ahead of themselves, now in the age and power that is coming to meet them. The Spirit joins the two horizons of time and eternity through the blood of Christ, and the regenerate live in the future now. New birth is an eternal state, entered and enjoyed proleptically, now, in actual time, by the believer.

Jesus said those born from above, born again, the regenerate, will see the kingdom of Heaven, will enter the kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom is both now and not yet – it broke in among us when Christ came to us (Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20), when Pentecost occurred and it will come fully when Christ returns (Revelation 11:15).

The born again are tomorrow's people from tomorrow's world today. Regeneration is the new life of the future now. It is the regeneration of the human spirit for the eternal God by God's Spirit in time. The human spirit is regenerated, not the body. (John 3:6: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Note: 'flesh' here refers to physical life and is not the same as Paul's notion of flesh / *sarx* as fallen nature.) The body is decaying and dying, but in glory, the regenerate spirit will be reclothed with an immortal, imperishable, incorruptible body (1 Corinthians 15:42–49; 2 Corinthians 5:2–5; Philippians 3:21). Consequently, we may not expect now the regeneration of our bodies on the basis of the regeneration of our spirits. We may hope and see signs of the

future body now, by way of divine healing, but this will always be partial and prophetic.

Regeneration is passive

We have seen that John 3, Titus 3 and 1 Peter 1:3, emphasise that the new birth in us originates from outside us. We are born by the Spirit, from above, according to God's action on our behalf in Christ by the Spirit. John 1:13 says our new birth as God's children occurs not through 'blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. We are passive recipients of grace and mercy. James 1:18: 'Of his own will he brought us forth.'

Earlier, we considered how the human heart and mind, though corrupted by sin and the Fall, is drawn to contemplate God, his beauty, majesty, glory, divinity and righteousness. This Prevenient Grace, God's grace going before the gospel, awakening and preparing our hearts for God, is a work of the Spirit. It originates with God. The Spirit then enters the human soul through the blood covenant. Owen rightly calls the blood of Christ *vehiculum Spiritus*, the vehicle of the Spirit.

But historically a question has been raised concerning the extent to which the human participates in this divine entrance and the regeneration which ensues. It reflects the age-old Arminian versus Calvinist, free will versus sovereign will debate. The two sides are sometimes termed *synergistic* and *monergistic*. Those who hold to synergism assert that the individual sinner co-operates with God in salvation. We see hints of this in the sixteenth century with Erasmus and Melanchthon, with Arminius in the seventeenth, and Wesley in the eighteenth. They recognise that it is God who saves, but we who may choose and activate this new birth. The decision is ours. Erasmus said: 'Free will is the power of applying oneself to grace.'[8] Melanchthon wrote that in conversion:

> Three causes are conjoined: The Word, the Holy Spirit and the Will not wholly inactive, but resisting its own weakness . . . God draws, but draws him who is willing . . . and the will is not a statue, and that spiritual emotion is not impressed upon it as though it were a statue.[9]

Conversely, monergists assert that human nature is so depraved that grace itself is necessary as a gift to open the mind and move the will and exercise faith to embrace the gospel and to be regenerate. Augustine emphasised this in his defence of grace against Pelagius. Owen has emphasised the work of

the Spirit in drawing us (John 6:65), imparting faith (Philippians 1:29), convicting (John 16), and giving us the grace to believe (Ephesians 2:8).[10] Luther said the sinner is so captive to sin he cannot even call out for help – he has a bondage to the will. Arthur Pink states that we are dead until life comes (Ezekiel 37:14) – the dead can't ask for life, they are dead. Not only does the life originate from outside, but so does the very desire for life. Regeneration and salvation must be wholly applied by the Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13).[11]

My own view follows the Augustinian / Reformed tradition that *God saves us single-handedly.* Regeneration is totally by the Spirit of God. We did not assist in our creation, nor do we help in our re-creation. It is self-evident that the sinner is wooed to the Saviour: 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him' (John 6:44). The Spirit opens the sinner to God's righteousness and his own sinfulness. The Spirit, through the word, presents to the sinner the offer of life and new birth. But does the sinner have a momentary free volitional will to choose?

Such matters are part of a larger theological schema our main theme does not permit us to pursue. But may I simply say that Adam and Eve knew they had sinned and were naked (Genesis 3:6–7), and hid from God (3:8). God did not tell them they were naked, they told him (3:10a). God did not tell them to be afraid, they were (3:10b). Yes, only God could provide fitting clothes for their nakedness, but God did not tell them they needed clothes, they tried to clothe themselves (Genesis 3:7). Despite the Fall, some ability to discern and respond negatively or positively to God appears to remain. Nowhere does Scripture suggest this was an immediate direct revelation of nakedness or need for covering or need to fear God by the Spirit. Jesus' instruction to Nicodemus was 'you must be born again'. A supernatural birth from above and by the Spirit. But the invitation is presented to this man and explained when queried. Unless this is meaningless discourse, Nicodemus appears to have a decision to make. If so, that decision in no way undermines God as the only all-sufficient saviour, redeemer and regenerator. Regeneration is a divine work – as humans, all we bring to it is to come helpless and lean on Christ, trusting in the name of Jesus who saves us from our sins (John 1:12). If I come trusting, then I know that I am regenerate.

Regeneration is superlative

Regeneration is far more than the recapitulation, reversal and restoration of the human to a pre-fall Adamic state. It is all that, but it is more. Adam walked with God in the garden – but we are now seated with God in heavenly places. Adam knew the presence of God accompanying, we know the presence of God indwelling. Adam may have been a 'son of God', like the angels, as creature of God – but the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits that we are sons of God and heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16f). At conception, through Adam we inherit our flesh, a dead-to-God spirit, condemnation and death (Romans 5:12f; Ephesians 2:5). At regeneration, through Christ, we inherit the promise of a resurrection body, our spirits alive to God by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9f). Through Adam we became a natural living being, through the Last Adam, a life-giving spirit, we become a spiritual being. Life from the first Adam springs up from the dust, the earth – life from the Last Adam comes down from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:45f).

Conclusion

This doctrine of regeneration is at the heart of the Christian faith. It is the prime work of the Spirit – the core of pneumatology. God recreates me – no longer accursed under Adam, but adopted through Christ. No longer condemned but acquitted. No longer a sinner to the core but a saint. No longer dead but alive. No longer hell-bound but heaven-sent. How must we respond?

- By worshipping God who would stoop to give his life to us.
- By trusting in his grace and not our self-righteous religious acts.
- By joyfully living forward – entering and enjoying the new life.
- By rejecting the carnal life, for the regenerated life in the Spirit.
- By telling others that God's grace can work a miracle for them.

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1 *Renewal Theology*, Book 2, pp. 35, 50.

2 *Spirit of the Living God*, p. 218.

3 Quoted in Morris, *Spirit of the Living God*, p. 218.

4 'Commentaries', Christian Classics Ethereal Library online.

5 *Systematic Theology*, p. 468.

6 *Spiritual Man*, p. 84.

Ibid., p. 85.

7

8 Quoted in Fry, ‘Synergism’, in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology.*

9 Ibid.

10 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 214.

11 Pink, ‘Sermons’, Church on the Threshold website.

9

THE SPIRIT AND SANCTIFICATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter we considered how the Spirit, having convicted us of sin and convinced us of our need for Jesus the Saviour, freely of his own grace justified us and cleansed us of our sins through the merits of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice. In response to our faith, he graciously comes to dwell in us and we become his temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). God, by his Spirit, sets up home in the spirit of the believer (Romans 8:10). The Spirit of life has come to us, in our state of spiritual death (Ephesians 2:5), and brought us to new life (John 3:1–8; 1 Peter 1:3). We stand in a new relation to God because we have been made new creations by God (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, now brought to life, and now the residence of the Holy Spirit, our spirit and body may still be defiled and so Paul exhorts us: 'let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God' (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Sanctification – towards a definition

The somewhat churchy term *sanctification*, from Latin *sanctus* ('holy') and *facere* ('to work') is something that is ascribed to the believer as both a status conferred and as a process which continues to be wrought in us. Sanctification, to be sanctified, translates the Old Testament word *qadosh* whose root meaning is 'to cut', and generally refers to cultic separation unto God. Similarly, the New Testament word *hagiazo* stems from the word group relating to holiness, separation or perfection. As we will see, holiness, sanctification is a major theme in Scripture and consequently the

Church has reflected long and deep on its exact nature and meaning for the Christian.

John Owen spoke of it as, 'a virtue, a power, a principle of the spiritual life and grace, wrought, created, infused into our souls, antecedent to and the next cause of true acts of holiness'.[1] For Jonathan Edwards:

> Sanctification is the beauty of the Holy Spirit becoming the perfecting beauty of our humanity too, which is created to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, as Divine Love, activates our Holy Affections of love to God, without which we are incomplete.[2]

A. H. Strong defines it in relation to other operations of the Spirit: 'Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which the holy disposition imparted at regeneration is maintained and strengthened.'[3] In a similar tradition, Louis Berkhof writes of:

> The gracious and continual operation of the Holy Spirit by which he delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin – renews his whole nature in the image of God and enables him to perform good works.[4]

Millard Erickson defines sanctification in relation to Christ: 'The Spirit at work in the believer bringing about the likeness of Christ.'[5] Similarly, Sinclair Ferguson sees it as the *telos* (Greek, meaning 'goal' or 'purpose') of the Spirit's operation: 'The Holy Spirit works in the regenerate to unite us to Christ . . . the goal of his activity is transformation into the likeness of Christ.'[6] The Catholic scholar Gaybba emphasises its relational purpose:

> . . . by sharing in the community and unity of God, we share in his holiness. The change in our lives does not take place all at once – like life itself it grows . . . Love changes us at the depth of our being. Good works are the fruit, expressing the presence of love.[7]

Moltmann notes the tension between what is positional and what is practical: 'Sanctification, which is a gift, leads to sanctification, which is a charge.'[8]

The Church's meditation on sanctification

The Church Fathers gave little attention to sanctification by the Spirit – confronted as they were by issues relating more to theology than spirituality, more to divine ontology than discipleship. However, in seeking to argue for the divinity of the Spirit, Athanasius (296–373), most noted for his stance against Arianism, deduced that the work of the Spirit as sanctifier of the believer pointed to the nature of the Spirit as divine. If holiness is a

divine predicate, then the Holy Spirit had to be divine, because only a divine person can work a divine effect. Sanctification by the Spirit proved his divinity. In the medieval Church a double standard developed – sanctification or saintliness was understood in relation to individuals' involvement in the world. Saintliness was properly evidenced only of persons in religious orders, (priests, monks, nuns), through their 'detachment' from the world – a dirty sinful, fallen place – with deep acquaintance defiling and militating against sanctification. Non-'religious', or lay believers, because of their deeper connection to the world, their participation in sexual relations (even if married), could only achieve a relative sanctification through sacramental devotion, discipline and works of righteousness.[9]

The Eastern Church contributed a rather beautiful concept related to sanctification, known as *Theosis* or *divinisation* – a beatification of the believer into the very image of God (2 Peter 1:4). Their stress is not so much on the action of the Spirit, but the faith and work of the believer through asceticism, sacraments, life within the church community, and particularly the ceaseless prayer of the heart. Sanctification is conformation into a mirror image of Christ. It comes not without struggle through which the believer seeks to unite their will, thought and action to God's will – his thoughts and his actions. This divine / human partnership is not only a recapitulation of Adam's Fall, but a greater glorification as we are drawn into the very being of God.

The sixteenth-century reformers used the term 'works righteousness' to describe their understanding of the Catholic notion that righteousness is based on good works. They wanted to exorcise any hint of works righteousness implicit in the medieval Church's treatment of holiness, replacing it with emphasis on grace and faith. One key Reformation slogan stated: *Simul justus et peccator* – 'We are sinful and justified at the same time.' Righteousness is imputed through the merits of Christ alone. However, the individual declared righteous by grace through faith by that very same grace and faith must move towards internal moral transformation. Luther taught that the believer, having received the Spirit of *vivificatio*, is moved towards *sanctificatio* through the inner work of the Spirit stemming out of the believer's relationship with word and sacrament. His emphasis is on *mortificatio* of the sinful nature, rather than on living the resurrected life in God, *vivificatio*, which comes from the primary place of

the cross and forgiveness of sin in his theology.[10] Calvin taught that sanctification was a *continual* work of the Spirit in the believer[11] – the Spirit will always make holiness a concern in the regenerated. But the evidences of holiness are not so much a work, as a posited God-given virtue.[12]

The seventeenth-century Puritan John Owen reflected more deeply than any other theologian I know on the matter of sanctification. He stressed that God was the author of sanctification by the Spirit, who was carrying through the regeneration he had worked in the Elect. Holiness was a 'habit' infused in the mind, will and affections of the believer, creating obedience to God's commandments and conformity to the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the *procuring cause* of purity, through the application of Jesus' *ever-warm blood* as *efficient cause*. Sanctification is a principle wrought and preserved by the Spirit. Nevertheless, the believer has a responsibility to mortify sin, have godly sorrow at sin, daily cleanse the heart and mind and to commune with God. The good works, obedience to the laws of God and the holy habits that mark the sanctified do not stem from the individual but from the internal supernatural principle of Grace. The new heart and new life given by the Spirit in Ezekiel 11 will cause the believer to obey God's statutes, not as law but as inevitable inclination.[13]

Walter Marshall wrote one of the most widely distributed of all Puritan tracts, published in 1692: 'The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification.' An attack on works righteousness, Marshall, presented fourteen 'directions' towards the sanctification of the believer which he saw as, 'no dream but a day to day evidence that the saints go from faith to faith as they grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus'. This thoroughgoing thesis argued that the holiness God requires is a holiness God provides. The third principle states: 'There is no sanctification without the Holy Spirit.' The Holy Spirit unites us to Christ as the solitary and altogether sufficient fountain of spiritual life. As a consequence, the believer is rooted, built up and formed in Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifying the soul of a redeemed sinner is a *bounteous gift of divine love*. Sanctification is not the recapitulation of the pre-Fall Adamic nature but the mortification of the flesh and the imaging of Christ in us. Sanctification is an internal grace, but is strengthened by divinely graced external means such as: prayer, the word, the sacraments, fellowship, psalm-singing and self-examination. These all foster union with Christ and nurture his image in us. By the encouragement and assurance of

God's saving love, we are compelled to love God's law, and desire his holiness.[14]

Pietism was a European lowland movement which reacted to the hard dogmatic theology of Lutheranism and sought a more practical Christianity, rooted in intimate and warm experience and expression of the faith. It was a religion of the heart and affections. Sanctification came as a work of the Spirit, through responding obediently to the divine will, revealed through the *internal leadings* of the Spirit – a by-product of the spirituality of intimacy with Christ. Consequently, Pietists promoted the personal devotional life – coming near to the Saviour, listening to his word, faithfully cohering with it. Sadly, in the Pietist movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, holiness became the preoccupation rather than a byproduct of intimacy with Christ – separation, isolation and legalism developed, as a new justification by works took hold.

In the eighteenth century, John Wesley's 'The Plain account of Christian Perfection' was taken up by the Methodists and subsequent nineteenth-century Holiness movements, teaching that *entire sanctification*, or *perfection* – freedom from all known sin – was attainable, and should be pursued and prayed for by the believer. Though this could lead to works righteousness, discipline being regarded as the key to perfection, it was generally taught that this was an 'experience', a gift of grace by the Spirit, second and subsequent to conversion. The influential American evangelist Charles Finney also taught this, calling it perfect love or entire sanctification. This baptism of the Spirit for holiness, later influenced the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement, morphing into a baptism for power.

In the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century liberal tradition, sanctification was understood to be the process of moral improvement in which the higher self overcomes the lower self, for Schleiermacher the progressive of an internal God consciousness.[15] The Keswick movement was noted for its emphasis on sanctification. Following a similar trajectory to that of Wesleyan holiness, entire sanctification was accepted by many as a second work of the Spirit, after regeneration, through submitting to Christ as Lord, not just embracing him as Saviour. This 'victorious Christian life' came at a decisive point of consecration and submission to the lordship of Christ, but needed to be sustained by prayer, the word, fellowship and suffering.

In the twentieth-century evangelical tradition, the notion of sanctification combines elements of cultural separation and personal transformation on the basis of devotion and discipline. Often, regrettably, it has been understood in negatives: *no* drinking, *no* smoking, *no* dancing, etc., rather than the more positive biblical invitation: '*Be* holy, because I am holy.' More emphasis has been placed on the individual responsibility of holiness than perhaps the operation of the Holy Spirit within. Regrettably in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, sanctification as a theological foundational doctrine, and holiness as a personal and communal imperative, do not seem to be high on the agenda. Holiness has become a dirty word, as the Church has become rather dirty.

Sanctification – a biblical presentation

Spiritus sanctus sanctificit – the Holy Spirit sanctifies

God's coming to us, by the Spirit, through the cross, establishes us positionally as saints, and enables us to become saints practically. Having become the Holy Spirit's holy home, he begins 'changing rooms' to make it holy. Over ninety times in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is called Holy – after conversion, our holiness is his major role.

Scripture speaks of sanctification as both an *accomplished event*, a *present experience*, and a *future hope*. First, as an accomplished event, in 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the writers state that *we have been* sanctified by the Spirit – referring to the initial justification and regeneration event whereby we are made acceptable to God. Secondly, as a present experience – Paul says in Romans 6:19 and 22, having been set free from sin and having become slaves to God, *fruit develops* that leads to sanctification; similarly, Hebrews 10:14 speaks of those being 'sanctified' who have already been perfected (cf: 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 5). Sanctification is thus an ongoing process of becoming holy by the Spirit. Thirdly, as a future hope – in Romans 15:16, Paul says the goal of his ministry is to present the Gentile converts as sacrifices, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, acceptable to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 posits sanctification as the prayerful goal for the day of the Lord's return, as does 1 John 3:2, which says we purify ourselves in the hope of seeing him who is pure.

On the morning of my oldest son Joel's eighth birthday, his younger brother Nat (five) burst into my room and said, confused: 'He isn't eight, he

hasn't grown any taller.' In his mind, the change of age that day should have been instantly recognisable in gain in height. The Bible shows that regeneration should be evidenced in sanctification. New birth should be followed by growth. Birth is instant, growth is a lifetime process – but unless the child is sick, growth is the inevitable fruit of birth. Even as a seed has within it the power of germination and plant growth, so the newborn believer has inherent within them that which brings growth. Jonathan Edwards said that the desire for sanctification was an innate impulse in the regenerate: ''Tis as much the nature of one that is spiritually new born, to thirst after growth in holiness, as 'tis the nature of a newborn babe, to thirst after the mother's breast.'[16] We are made holy by virtue of the incoming of the Holy Spirit when we are re-born, and we are to become holy by virtue of the exercise and the outworking of the Holy Spirit in us as we grow. In his massive treatise on the Spirit, Gordon Fee presents the two horizons of the *already and future* sanctification of the believer. First he says: 'Sanctification is not a second work of grace . . . conversion may be described in terms of sanctification.'[17] However, later he states that the body: 'is sanctified by the presence of God himself through the Holy Spirit. We must therefore sanctify it as well, by living the life in the Spirit, a life of holiness'.[18] No contradiction here, simply the biblical understanding.

Sadly, Scripture shows and Church experience testifies, that many fail to be what they are – they may be positionally sanctified, but not practically. As Paul's letter to the Corinthians states so unequivocally, the Corinthians were regarded already as saints (1 Corinthians 1:2), but they were unsaintly in their lifestyle – they had the Spirit in residence (1 Corinthians 3:16), but they were marked by deep carnality and lack of spirituality resulting, among other things, in immaturity, immorality and idolatry. Similarly, the Galatians had received the Spirit (3:2), but failed to walk in the Spirit and were living legalistic religious lives in which they were powerless to overcome flesh, and which needed challenging (Galatians 5–6). Like the Ephesians, we have received the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13f) but are challenged not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) through sins of body and soul – fleshly cravings and actions, and the use of our mind, intellect, emotions and will which have not been permeated by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a surgeon who uses the cross and blood of Christ to cut deeply into our soul, mind and spirit – our fleshly cravings, our soulish emotions, our self-willing, our corrupted thinking, and to cut out the

open sores and scar tissue of sin. The great struggle of the Christian life is to become what we are, to allow the Holy Spirit to make us in his image. The indicative of the believer receiving the Spirit must be wed to the imperative of the believer walking in the Spirit. Our new life as saints must lead to our new lifestyle as sanctified.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

The answer is the chicken. Genesis 1 says that on the fifth day, God created birds to fly (verse 20), every sort of winged bird (verse 21), which then were to multiply (verse 22). The birds were created and then they multiplied and made eggs. Proverbially and spiritually speaking, God brought us forth, not as eggs but as birds – full grown! We need to learn to fly, and lay eggs.

In considering the relationship between regeneration and sanctification, we note that many of the current major religions, and perhaps the pre-Reformation Church in the West, function on the basis that justification and regeneration depend on our personal efforts at sanctification. Through sacrifice and devotion, we make ourselves holy and right-standing with God. Christianity inverts this, gifting our justification and regeneration – not on the basis of our sacrifice, but on the basis of Christ's. New life is given at the start, and then holiness ensues and is pursued:

- Regeneration is an accomplished event – sanctification is an ongoing adventure.
- Regeneration is passive surrender – sanctification is active warfare.
- Regeneration is God spiritually transplanting into us a new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 11:19).
- Sanctification is our learning to 'walk in his statutes' (Ezekiel 11:20).

'From me comes your fruit' (Hosea 14:8)

Sanctification is the will of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and it is a work of the Lord (Exodus 31:13). It is achieved through the blood of the Lord (Hebrews 10:29), through faith in the Lord (Acts 26:18), responding to the word of the Lord (John 17:17), which thoroughly prepares us for the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:23). God remains subject and the object of our sanctification, the cause and the goal.

Though sanctification is a work begun by the Spirit, promoted by the Spirit and enabled by the Spirit, unlike regeneration, in which the sinner

was utterly passive, in sanctification the believer is active, partnering with the residing Holy Spirit, allowing him to search and salt the sinful body, soul and spirit. In the last chapter we considered the debate over whether regeneration is monergist or synergist – whether it is a work uniquely from God, or whether we have a part to play in it. I concluded it was monergist – God saves us utterly and single-handedly. However, the same cannot be said for sanctification, which is synergist. While it originates from the internal impulse of the Spirit and is effectual through the Spirit, we play our part. As the four hundred-year-old Lutheran Formula of Concord states:

> . . . as soon as the Holy Ghost . . . has begun in us this His work of regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost we can and should cooperate . . . from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Ghost has begun in us at conversion . . .[19]

Culver agrees: 'We are commanded to co-operate with God's Spirit in sanctification.'[20]

As positionally sanctified born-again believers (1 Peter 1:2–3), an event in which we were passive recipients, we are instructed to actively prepare our minds for action, to be sober-minded, obedient, conforming no longer to our former passions, and to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:13–16), putting away deceit, hypocrisy, slander, envy, and craving pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:1f). Being made by God a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), we must abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against our souls. We are to actively engage in *training* the soul in righteousness (1 Timothy 4:7; Titus 2:12) conforming to Christ (Romans 12:2), resisting sin (Hebrews 12:4), walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), dying to self (Luke 9:23), putting to death the flesh (Colossians 3:5), imitating God (Ephesians 5:1), pressing on for perfection (Philippians 3:12f), living to righteousness (Matthew 5–7; Romans 6:17f), and abiding in Christ (1 John 3:6). The Spirit is the impulse for this and the means of it, but we participate. He leads us, he enables us to lean on him, but we walk in step with the Spirit.

Let me underline three key texts which emphasise our partnering with the Spirit for our sanctification:

1. Waging war

J. Rodman Williams says: 'We may compete or concede to sin.'[21] Put simply, Romans 5 informs us that the believer has been *justified* with Christ. Romans 6:1– 14 tells us the believer has been *identified* and *crucified* with Christ; once slaves to sin, we now are to be slaves of

righteousness (verses 15–18), bearing fruit in righteousness, leading to sanctification (6:19, 22). Sadly, Romans 7 tells of the Christian's deep struggle to bear fruit, to be *sanctified in Christ*. The desire to live the holy law cannot be fulfilled. The flesh seems too powerful – moral failure and existential despair ensue (7:23–24). However, Hallelujah – in Christ there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1–4), and what is more, we are shown how to be holy in 8:5–14. This is a text that recognises the reality of the battle; it shows the roots of the sin; it proffers hope of true victory; it shows us the effective means available and it directs us to our responsibility.

The battle is lost or won in the mind:

The mind is hostile to God and refuses to submit to God's law. *Sin in the flesh begins with the set of the mind* (verse 5a).

- The sinful mind which directs the flesh can be reset by living in the Spirit (verse 5b – note the order: living according to the Spirit then sets the mind on the Spirit).
- The Spirit is not far away but living within us (verse 9).
- The Spirit is the power that raised Jesus from the dead (verse 11) – if he can reverse death itself, he can reverse the influence of sin in us.
- We must live in the Spirit (verse 5b) and be led by the Spirit (verse 14a).
- We must actively 'put to death' the sinful deeds of the flesh (verse 13b) by the Spirit.

How? Imagine you are tempted by the sin of adultery. Your mind may imagine various scenarios and your body is programmed to enact these. As a Christian with the Spirit indwelling and scriptural truth crystal clear you choose to refuse to engage your *mind* on this scenario. You *set your minds* on scriptural truth concerning sin and holiness (Psalm 16:8; 101:3; Colossians 3:2; Hebrews 6:18; 12:1). If the temptation presents itself in an actual situation, you choose to put to death the deeds of the flesh, exercising your will, resisting the sin in mind or flesh, and turning to the Spirit. Submit to the leading of the Spirit within and invoking his infinite power to deliver. *Sin is not overcome by our will per se*, *but by our will turning to and depending on the Spirit's power*. While recognising the reality that believers do sin, no Christian needs to be enslaved by sin. Easier said than done perhaps, but here is hope and here is the path to holiness. Sin does not need

to master us – through Christ we are already free from its sting of condemnation, but we may be free from its dominion by setting our minds, walking with and obeying the Spirit's impulse and instruction.

2. Beholding Christ

This is part of the Christian mindset. Rather than meditating on sin, which then activates itself in our flesh, we choose to have our mind set on Christ. In our struggle against sin we are to resist while *fixing our eyes* on Jesus who endured such shame (Hebrews 12:2f). When tempted to sin, we may reflect that it was that very sin in part which caused Christ's agonies at Calvary! Even as we set Christ always before us (Psalm 16:8), he who is the altogether lovely one (Song of Solomon 5:16), the lures and lusts of sin tarnish in his glorious light.

What you look like shows us what you are looking at: In 2 Corinthians 3:16f: '. . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.' The Spirit's role is always directing us to consider Christ. As we follow the Spirit's directing, as we gaze on him, setting our minds, attention, and affections on him, the Spirit comes to us again and imprints on us the image of Christ. *We begin to look like that which we look at*. This is freedom – freedom from self and sin. The tense reveals that this is not a one-off event, but a continuous gazing and glorification.

3. Walking in the Spirit

Galatians 5 shows us what the fruit of the sinful nature looks like and what the fruit of the Spirit-filled nature looks like. The works of the flesh are evident (verse 19f): 'sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these'. The fruit of the Spirit is also evident (verse 22f): 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control'. This Christ we contemplate and who changes us into his image is the Christ who looks like this list.

In verse 24, Paul says that, 'those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'. He is reminding the readers of their conversion and baptism – a decisive identification with Christ, embracing his forgiveness and severing them from their sinful past. Reminded of the cross and relying on the Spirit they must continue to live

that event out by *walking* in the Spirit (*pneumati peripateite*, verse 16), being *led* by the Spirit (*pneumati agesthe*, verse 18), living by the Spirit (*zomen pneumatic*, verse 25a), and being guided by the Spirit (*pneumati kai stoikomen*, verse 25b). The Holy Spirit is to be the milieu in which we live. As the ancient Celtic prayer (*Carmina Gadelica*) puts it:

God to enfold me, God to surround me,
God in my speaking, God in my thinking,
God in my sleeping, God in my waking,
God in my watching, God in my hoping,
God in my life, God in my lips,
God in my soul, God in my heart,
God in my suffering, God in my slumber,
God in mine ever-living soul,
God in my eternity.[22]

Paul's imperatives forcefully instruct us to be led by the Spirit – enacting our will to give in to the Spirit's will. The fruit is sanctification. The opposite option is to live from the flesh where the fruit is moral corruption. Presumably the Galatian Christians were informed of this by Paul because their law-keeping efforts were powerless to keep the flesh at bay. Paul clearly presents them with a choice: to walk in, and bear the fruit of the Spirit or the flesh. *The devil is not blamed for sin*, *nor the flesh*, *but the individual choosing to walk in their way*! You and I have a choice which we want to walk in – the power of the Spirit is readily available to help us if we make the right choice.

Conclusion

Sanctification is holiness. It is an *accomplished state* through the blood of Jesus who has wiped away our sin and made us the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. It is a *present struggle*, as our new house-guest articulates his holy loving nature in us. It is a *future hope*, that one day at resurrection we will cast off this tainted mortal coil and put on the new pure resurrection body. In view of this, *entire sanctification* must be our passionate aim in this life, even if it may be unattainable. Sanctification has a *negative aspect* – putting to death the sins and stains of the old Adamic nature, and a *positive aspect* – quickening the new nature in the likeness of Christ. Sanctification affects *the whole of our being* – body, soul and spirit. It is a work in partnership between the Spirit of God and the action of the believer. It is aided by the disciplined life of prayer, worship, fasting, service,

communion, study and obedience to the word. Sanctification is an *internal work* but *evidenced externally* through personal *Christ-like character and good works* that benefit others. Sanctification is a holy habit, through the habitation of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is a journey, becoming what we are positionally in regeneration, and what we shall be eschatologically at the resurrection.

1 John 3:2f: '. . . when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he [Christ] is pure'.

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1 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 308.

2 Quoted in Mellor, *Jonathan Edwards and the Affections*.

3 *Systematic Theology*, p. 869.

4 *Systematic Theology*, p. 532.

5 *Christian Theology*, p. 971.

6 *Holy Spirit*, p. 139.

7 *Spirit of Love*, pp. 213–216.

8 *Spirit of Life*, p. 174.

9 White, 'Sanctification', in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

10 Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 164.

11 McNeill, 3.14.1.

12 Ibid., 3.14.2.

13 Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, pp. 240–350 (esp. 307–311).

14 Marshall, 'Gospel Mystery of Sanctification', Covenant of Grace website.

15 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 530f.

16 *Religious Affections*, p. 366.

17 *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 79.

18 Ibid., p. 137.

19 From 'Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord', Book of Concord website.

20 *Systematic Theology*, p. 759.

21 *Renewal Theology* vol. 2, p. 103.

22 Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*.

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THE SPIRIT AND SONSHIP

Introduction

We live in a society that is fatherless. The moral lassitude arising from the sexual libertarianism of the post-1960s has reaped disastrous consequences for the many children born into this milieu and for the wider society as a whole. In thirty years, from the early 1970s to 2004, single-parent families rose from one in fourteen to one in four. Consider these startling university-collated statistics from Canada:

85% of children exhibiting behavioural disorders come from fatherless homes.
90% of all homeless and runaway children come from fatherless homes.
80% of all rapists motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes.
70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes.
85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes.[1]

The article states:

. . . pick a social ill at random and you will find that the correlation with fatherlessness is clear and direct. Depression. Suicide. Dropping out of school. Teenage pregnancy. Drug use. In sum, fatherless children are:

5 times more likely to commit suicide;
32 times more likely to run away;
20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders;
14 times more likely to commit rape;
9 times more likely to drop out of school;
10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances;
9 times more likely to end up in a mental institution;
20 times more likely to end up in prison.[2]

In a similar British study, fatherless children were shown as thirty-three times more likely to be abused either by stressed mothers, family members

or visiting temporary boyfriends. In the UK, The Economic and Social Research Council[3] informed us that in 2004, there were 1.8 million one-parent families in Britain, 90 per cent of which were lone mother family units, caring for nearly three million children.

In the West, a *fatherless generation* is growing up. Now, in some respects, this has always been the case – centuries of military conflict when the 'men went off to war' never to come back, resulted in children growing up fatherless. The war now is more subtle, but no less dangerous and disastrous, especially for the *children left behind*. At least in the past they could consider their father as a hero dying for a cause – but for most today, they have no noble epithets to comfort them – many have never known their dads at all, many have only known their fathers as absent, abusive or adulterous. (Of course, one must recognise that some single mother families are the result of medical tragedy or a legal system that often discriminates against the father, who is not given the chance to be the father he longs to be.) Even where there are outstanding mothers, against the backdrop often of financial hardship, children who grow up without a father can suffer. Deeply felt rejection, an inner sense of abandonment, fear, a lack of appropriate role-modelling or paternal discipline may create emotional, psychological and social problems which surface later in life. I don't wish to become moralistic and blame the sexual revolution or the ease with which divorce is available, and society's ready embrace of both, that is not the purpose of this chapter – though the correlation seems unequivocal. Rather, I want to point to God's paternal, compassionate, restoring, gracious desire and his divine offer to make up what is missing.

God – Father to the fatherless

This is the glorious title that David ascribes to God in Psalm 68:5. This concept of God as Father is infrequently found in the Old Testament and never used as a proper name, an intimate personal expression of filial relationship. Generally it appears in the collective sense, of God as the father of the nation, or descriptively and metaphorically of the relationship God has with the nation (Deuteronomy 1:31; 32:6; Jeremiah 3:19; 31:9; Isaiah 63:16; Malachi 1:6). When addressed directly, God was spoken of as *Yahweh* (Lord) or *Adonai* (God). Strict Jews would try to avoid even using these personal names and speak of *ha shem* ('the name'). God was to be

approached from a respectful distance, with awe. Intimacy and familiarity were generally avoided.

Jesus utterly revolutionises this and makes ‘Father’ the normative description of God and personal address to him. To those who accept him as their Saviour, Jesus came to reveal and mediate the Father (Luke 10:22; John 14:8–9). Over 250 times in the New Testament, 175 times in the Gospels alone, Jesus refers to God as the Father. This was clearly how Jesus understood his relationship to God, as son to father – but it was the same relationship he invited his disciples to enjoy – instructing them in what would have been revolutionary, to pray ‘Father’ (Luke 11:2). Michael Card has said that to experience God as Father is to begin to know him as Jesus knows him.[4] Pannenberg has rightly shown that Jesus’ referential use of the title ‘Father’ for God shows that the personal character of the God whom Christians worship is inseparably bound up with this concept.[5]

The God Jesus came to bring us is God who is Father.

Do we want a Father God?

If the Old Testament is somewhat diffident in addressing God as Father, only doing so descriptively, this is virtually absent from other religions. The ancient Babylonians held the notion of exceptional individuals who could call God ‘father’ by virtue of their conception by divine impregnation. Similarly the Greeks had a notion of Zeus as the father of the gods, but the gods were not known as ‘father’ to mere mortals – only Hercules, the product of sex between a divine and a mortal could consider God as a father. In Hinduism, despite the plethora of gods, none is specifically ‘father’, and the supreme god-source and creator Brahma is impersonal and not worshipped as ‘father’. Islam has ninety-nine noble names for Allah, but no mention of God as ‘father’. Indeed, a remarkable book by a Muslim convert to Christianity is titled appropriately, *I Dared to Call Him Father*.[6] To predicate our intimacy with God as a father to child is a uniquely Christian concept.

The ‘father of modern psychoanalysis’, Freud, argued that to conceptualise God as ‘father‘ was a mere Feuerbachian projection by humans onto the nature of God – positing our own needs, desires or aspirations onto a divine figure. Freud argued that some of us have had such appalling natural fathers, that we seek compensation in an ideal divine father. Freud believed that if we dealt with this neurosis, then we would no

longer need to call God our father. Because the concept of God as father is an exclusively Christian one as shown above, presumably only Christians are neurotic and may benefit from his analysis?

Feminism and *Christian Feminists* have objected to conceptualising God as father, seeing it as a power-play by men, which oppresses women. If God is father, God is understood as masculine; if God is masculine, women feel excluded. If God is male, males can easily think they are God and oppress women. It is claimed a patriarchal system of male dominance is programmed and reinforced by Christian concepts of God as father. While recognising their negative experiences, I believe they misunderstand the nature of God's fatherhood, which Christ reveals. Furthermore, they have failed adequately to recognise that many of the other religious systems where there is virtually no trace of God's fatherhood are often far more patriarchal and oppressive to women than historic Christianity.

Liberal Protestantism coined a little ditty, credited to Adolph Von Harnack, to describe Christianity's core tenets as, 'The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man'.[7] God was regarded as the father of all humankind by virtue of being creator – however, this finds little biblical support – quite the contrary. Jesus actually declared that the Jewish Pharisees who were opposed to him were of their father *the devil* and they were doing the will of their father (John 8:44). Erickson believes that at conversion we are restored to the relationship with God we were originally intended for and the new relationship with God is not something totally new.[8] However, as we will see, the new relationship with Father God as his adopted children is radically new and available for the first time to those who are justified through Christ and have received the Spirit. Even those who were regarded as being justified and righteous before God through faith under the old covenant were never described as being children of God their Father (Romans 3:24, 25; 4:1–22). Thus, the new relationship the Christian enters into is not a patched-up old one that Adam knew, it is qualitatively different and infinitely more glorious. Furthermore, the relationship with God as father of his newly adopted sons is uniquely a work of the Holy Spirit, uniquely given to the believer through the unique work of Christ upon the cross, who achieves a unique standing never before experienced. Being able to call God Father as his beloved sons is part of the *Ordo Salutis* ('order of salvation') – a sinner justified, a prisoner redeemed, an enemy reconciled, an orphan adopted.

Luke 15 – the parable of the prodigal son and the remarkable father

Barth has cautioned that in understanding the *fatherhood of God* we should not posit on God our notions of fatherhood, and fall prey to Feuerbach / Freud's critique that God is just a hypostasised projection of what we want from God, or even hate in our natural fathers. Instead, we must allow the revelation God gives in Scripture and through his Son to determine our concept of God as Father. The so-called 'parable of the prodigal son' (Luke 15:11–31), lets us see how Christ sees the Father and would have us see him. I am not comfortable with the usual title of this well-known parable, focusing our thinking in rather Protestant notions on the state of sin of the rebellious boy, rather than on his restoration and the staggering generosity and affection of the father. Rather than the 'prodigal son' it should be titled the 'remarkable father'.

We know the story well: the son asks for his share of the inheritance. His father is not dead, but he wants what is coming to him and to cut loose. The father graciously gifts his share to his son, who leaves and squanders everything on wine, women and song. When everything is spent, a famine comes and the boy hires himself to work, feeding pigs (not the best thing for a good Jewish boy). He is slowly starving to death, longing to eat the pigswill, when he comes to his senses and realises that his estranged father's servants at least get fed. So he returns intent on begging to be a servant of his father. *And here is where we see what God is like*: the father is waiting and watching, scanning the horizon, on the edge of his land, looking longingly, as he has done every day since his son left. When he catches the silhouette of his boy, knowing intimately how he carried himself and walked, the old man begins to run, and run, and when he gets to his son, breathless, wet with perspiration and tears, he pauses, then crushes his pig-stinking, bag-of-bones boy in his arms of love. The son tried to resist, unworthy, guilty, but dad is having none of it. He calls the servants: QUICKLY, bring the BEST robe, put it on him and a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet. A robe of honour, a signet ring of sonship, shoes worn by the free. He calls to have THE fatted calf prepared – the special one, the one they had been saving and feeding, and a party is thrown in his honour. Why? Because the dead have come alive, the lost have been found, a son is home with his dad. That is the blistering good news. That is what God is like. He is not malicious, capricious, vengeful or resentful. He is ecstatic,

forgiving, generous, honouring, extraordinary. You want to be with a dad like that and wonder how you ever left in the first place.

God as Abba

Jesus called God 'Abba'. It is an intimate child's expression akin to our term 'Daddy'. The Jewish scholar Jeremias said that the description and designation of God as Abba was one of the most unique statements and concepts which Christ introduced. He says, 'We are confronted [here] with something new and astounding. Herein lies the great novelty of the gospel.'[9] It has no parallel in the Old Testament, or in the Judaism of Christ's time. Only one late first-century source is found in rabbinical Judaism and that is placed as a prayer on the lips of children, then echoed by a Rabbi. Its meaning has long been debated. In the religious context, some try to soften the scandal of its intimacy by giving it a more mature, hands-off interpretation as 'Father'. But it was in fact the affectionate, intimate word a child would use of their dad at home. Abba's main expression was the trusting confident enjoyment of an infant who comes as a little child to sit on their papa's knee (Matthew 18:3).

Though this term is only found three times in the New Testament (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), scholars generally agree that it is a term which expresses *the very core of Jesus' religious life* and relationship with his Father God.[10] That God's own Son should call his Father Abba is perhaps understandable – that he should allow us to share that same relationship is unfathomable, except for limitless love. Brennan Manning notes: 'Jesus the Beloved Son, does not hoard this experience for Himself. He invites and calls us to share the same intimate and liberating relationship.'[11] The welcoming and normativising of an untranslated, undiluted Aramaic Jewish term in the Greco-Roman Church, reinforces the claim that its origin and its transmission is from Christ. While it is possible to conceive of 'father' in impersonal or respectful terms, or rather abstractly as progenitor (biological male parent), institutional originator (founding father), to speak of God as 'Abba' can convey only one meaning. Ascribed to God, it may have seemed almost blasphemous to the devout religious Jew who would avoid directly uttering God's name. To the sinner outside the worshipping community it may have seemed utterly miraculous that anyone could ever be allowed to comprehend, let alone converse with God

in such terms. Intimate, familiar, childish, embarrassing, preposterous, glorious – God invites us to call him *Papa*, *Daddy*. Pinnock says:

> We are invited inside the Trinity as joint heirs with Christ. By the Spirit we cry Abba together with the Son as we are drawn into the filial relationship and begin to participate in God's life.[12]

However, the experience we have of God as Abba is not exactly parallel to that of Jesus. Our experience of God as Abba comes through Jesus. Jesus is the eternal Son of Abba, who was born of flesh to make us who are born of the flesh eternal sons of Abba. Jesus knows Abba through his eternal generation as divine Son. We may know God as Abba through adoption.

Abba Father adopts

In the ancient Roman world adoption was common practice among the Patrician and Senatorial ruling classes. Sometimes used as a means of strengthening family ties, more usually to ensure that an appropriate successor could take over and manage the family's wealth rather than trust to luck of genetics and birth, an appropriate male 'heir' was found, often a young distant cousin who had shown himself to be healthy, distinguished himself as a leader, shown courage in battle, etc. The parents of both families would agree the adoption, money would be exchanged, legal documents and public ratifications secured, and the son would be transferred from one family to the next. Instantly the son lost all rights with his biological family and gained all rights as son and heir of the new adoptive family. This was an upwardly mobile move. The 'five good emperors' – Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius – were five successive emperors who ruled the Roman Empire from 96–180. They were known for moderate policies, in contrast to their more tyrannical and oppressive successors, and for peaceful succession. Each emperor chose his successor by adopting an heir, thus preventing the political turmoil associated with the succession both before and after this period. Ironically, the appointing by Marcus Aurelius of his son Commodus as heir proved a disastrous choice, ending the glorious stable era of Pax Romana.[13] This cultural understanding of adoption forms the background to Paul's theological reflections.

Paul makes much of the status of the regenerate as *adopted sons*. Just as Christian men must come to terms with being described as the bride of Christ, Christian women must learn to appreciate they are adopted sons. We

must not let understandable matters of gender and inclusive language cloud the real issue here – this is not about sexism but status. Women remain women but take the honour of firstborn son. Paul uses the term adoption five times (Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). The Greek term he employs is *huiothesia* (a conjunction of *huios*, meaning 'son', and *thesis*, meaning 'secured position'), literally translated means 'adopted as a son'.

The believer becomes an adopted son in the family of God. Like those Caesars, we take that place of dignity, authority and responsibility. We are cut off from our past and the future is legally binding and secured by blood and Spirit. We become what we were not. As Berkhof notes: 'If they are adopted as children by God, it shows they are not children of God by nature as liberals believe. You can't adopt your own children.'[14] We gain what we did not have. Charles Haddon Spurgeon declared that at regeneration we are given the nature of children, but at adoption we are given the rights of children.[15] Distinctive in effect, they occur simultaneously. At great cost, we were bought, and then given great honour. The Spirit does not procure adoption (the blood does) but in terms of the believer's experience of salvation, the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption – that is, the Spirit actualises adoption for the believers.[16]

The spirit of adoption

Romans 8:14–17: 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons [*huiothesias*] by whom we cry Abba Father. The Spirit himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs . . .'

Galatians 4:4–7: 'God sent forth his Son born of woman to redeem those who are under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons [*huiothesian*], and because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba father, so you are no longer a slave but a Son, and if a Son then an heir.'

These two parallel purple passages unveil to us the most beautiful and glorious insights into the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Through faith, the believer has been justified (Romans 3–5; Galatians 2:16; 3:6), and simultaneously has received the Spirit (Romans 5:5; Galatians 3:2). They have moved from being slaves, living in fear and servitude before the law and the devil, to being free sons of God. The Spirit which regenerated them confers adoption in that same moment. It is not a higher

order benefit for the elite Christian, but for *all* who are led by the Spirit. Paul speaks of 'the Spirit of adoption', which Calvin lists as the first title of the Spirit, corresponding to what must be seen as the highest of the privileges of redemption, namely sonship.[17]

Fee says: 'the ultimate evidence of this sonship is their use of the Son's own address to the father in prayer – Abba'.[18] Cantalamessa says: 'the first thing the Holy Spirit does upon coming into us is to make us see God in a different way. The Spirit shows us the true face of God'.[19] That different way is to see him as our intimate daddy who likes us.

This adoption as sons, like the Roman adoption, is an upwardly mobile move to a privileged position of dignity, authority and responsibility – we become heirs of God with Christ. Our new position as sons of God is written and ratified publicly in blood on Golgotha's hill, but it is also known experientially. The Spirit in us whispers and witnesses with our Spirit that we are God's children, that he is our Abba. From deep within rises the child's cry of delight and desire for Abba. Diadochus of Photike says:

> The Spirit acts as would a mother teaching her baby to say 'daddy' and she repeats that name to her baby until the baby becomes so used to calling 'daddy' that it can call even in its sleep.[20]

This cry is involuntary and emotional. *Krazo* means to 'cry aloud', 'shriek' or 'scream', and was vocal, violent, unmistakable (Matthew 20:31; Mark 1:26; Mark 5:5). C. H. Dodd observed that it could be ascribed to those moments of religious fervour in revival when restraints and inhibitions are broken up and the inner life is expressed. Moo says that in using this verb, Paul is stressing that our awareness of God as father comes not from rational consideration nor from external testimony alone, but from a truth internally deeply felt and intensely experienced.[21] Dunn says that Paul would have had little personal sympathy with a purely rational faith or primarily ritualistic religion. 'The inner witness of the Spirit was something . . . at the heart of what distinguished his faith as a Christian from what he had known before.'[22]

We have been made sons of God, a party thrown in our honour, status, dignity, inheritance, authority conferred on us. We can live like sons in the Spirit, or like slaves. The Galatian Christians chose to live like slaves. The second son in the parable of the prodigal chose to live like a slave, bemoaning the years he had been enslaved, even though, all along, all his

father had was his. Such a revelation of our position before God, on the basis of the decree of the Father, the death of the Son and the deposit of the Spirit, should revolutionise our lives. God is Abba, our Father. I am his son, not his slave; I serve him freely and without fear – I relax in what my sonship means – security, identity, inheritance and freedom from anxiety and fear.

Conclusion

Being God's own sons should cause us to wonder and worship with all our heart. It should cause us to walk with our head held high that such dignity has been conferred upon us, sons who perpetuate God's name and inherit his estate. It should compel our passionate witness to this broken, lost 'fatherless generation'.

The Spirit of sonship crying 'Abba' is the heart-beat of a truly charismatic theology. Let me quote Tom Smail at length:

> Within the charismatic renewal today, there is a good deal more talk about spiritual gifts than exercise of them; more discussion about the power of the Spirit than actual experience of it. One of the main reasons for that is most people just do not have the confidence that God has accepted them and loves them just as they are as his children, and therefore will not let them be led astray by what is fleshly or demonic but will give them all that he has promised – his robe, his ring, his shoes. This confidence will not be created by repeated acts of laying on of hands, but only by an awareness of the Spirit's cry of Abba at the creative and motivating centers of our lives. This is what releases from the paralyzing fear of God and man that grips so many – and it is not a technique that we can master but a sovereign work of the Spirit which must liberate us.[23]

This experience of the Spirit of Sonship whereby we cry Abba is the crucial basis for the believer's *assurance* of salvation. Our hope, trust and confidence in the gospel come not simply through external evidences of the written word, and transformed lives, but through the internal witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are God's precious children.[24] Many Christians sadly have little or no assurance of their being intimately loved sons of Abba. They need to stand on the Scriptures and seek that Spirit's crying with their spirit – a deep calling to deep. This doctrine is great comfort as we tread through these few and fleeting steps of life and as we approach eternity and deity. Yes we come to God, but he is our God, he is Abba, father, daddy, papa – we are coming home. Spurgeon recalled how the respected Dr Guthrie, when he was dying said: 'sing me a hymn – sing me

one of the bairn's hymns'.[25] When a man dies he wants to be a child again. By the Spirit, let us live and die as children of Abba.

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1 MacRae, 'Root Causes of Crime', Quebecois Libre website.

2 Ibid.

3 www.esrc.ac.uk.

4 Quoted in Manning, *Abba's Child*.

5 *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 259f.

6 Sheikh, *I Dared to Call Him Father*.

7 Wattles, 'Golden Rule of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man', Kent State University website.

8 *Christian Theology*, p. 962.

9 *Parables of Jesus*, p. 128.

10 Schillebeeck, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, pp. 258–263.

11 *Abba's Child*, p. 62.

12 *Flame of Love*, p. 153.

13 Morey, 'Outlines of Roman History', Forum Romanum website.

14 *Systematic Theology*, p. 515.

15 Spurgeon, 'Sermons', Spurgeon Archive website.

16 Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 408.

17 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 182.

18 *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 405.

19 *Come, Creator Spirit*, p. 348.

20 Quoted in Cantalamessa, p. 346

21 *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 502.

22 *Romans*, p. 462.

23 *Forgotten Father*, pp. 149f.

24 Culver, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 772f.

25 Spurgeon, 'Sermons', Spurgeon Archive website.

11

THE SPIRIT WHO SATISFIES

The German New Testament Scholar Eduard Schweitzer noted nearly a century ago that, 'long before the Holy Spirit was an article in the creed he was a living experience in the church'.[1] He was a living experience in the life of Puritan John Bunyan who could say: 'I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel.'[2] This is biblical. Paul's statement: 'I know whom I have believed' (2 Timothy 1:12), indicates that intellectual, creedal comprehension and assent are only part of the Christian equation – there is a 'knowing' accompanying and informing the believing. In the Old Testament, the word 'know', *heb-yada*, was applied beyond the sense of merely attaining information, to intimate sexual relations: 'Adam knew Eve' (Genesis 4:1). After considerable revelation of, conversation with, and service for Yahweh, Moses in Exodus 33:13, still petitions God: '. . . show me now your ways that I might *know* you . . .' (ESV). What followed was not a didactic discourse but a dynamic encounter. It is this that is sadly lacking in much contemporary Christianity.

The divine command to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might', in Deuteronomy 6:5 (Matthew 22:37 replaces 'might' with 'mind'), must not be reduced to a correct intellectual understanding and verbal confession of assent to a set of propositions in creedal form; that is only one aspect of this loving. Presumably God also wants to love us in our hearts, our affections as well as in our soul, which biblically speaking is understood as our mind and will. Though essential to our religion, the mind is not the essence of such. Rather, the essence is an intimate loving relationship with God himself, in person, not with a creed, statement or concept.

Elsewhere I have written at length on this[3] and shown how the experiential, or what the Puritan terms *experimental*, is as essential to the core of the Christian faith as the cerebral and creedal. A cursory glance at Church history[4] reveals that whenever the Church has focused on the theological and creedal – often from necessity to correct invasive errors – there has invariably been a necessary balancing movement of the Spirit, emphasising the existential and experiential features of the faith. In no way do I want to appear to undermine rigorous systematic study and intellectual comprehension of the faith (2 Timothy 2:15 is a life verse for me), but this must always be balanced by the practical, devotional and experiential. This rise and fall, this rhythm of the intellectual followed by the spiritual, is traceable throughout Church history – at any one time in any one place with any one church, God is either working on their dogmatics, their ethics or their dynamic experience of him. The creedal formation era of the fourth and fifth centuries was balanced by the monastic movement emphasising a lived-out spirituality, rather than a thought-out theology. The rise of the rigorous medieval philosophical theologians (Anselm, Ockham and Aquinas), was balanced by the mystical theologians (Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard Rolle, William of Thiery). The sixteenth-century *biblical* theologies of Erasmus, Luther and Calvin, were balanced by the seventeenth-century 'experimental' theology of the Puritans. The theological exchanges between evangelicals and liberals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were balanced with the *felt Christ* of the Keswick movement, the Welsh revival and the outbreak of Pentecostalism.

I have previously shown how the Spirit brings to the believer the experience of conviction of sins and the experience of adoption as sons. In this chapter, I want to indicate some of the major ways in which the Spirit of God is experienced. You will observe that three of the four aspects of the felt Christ correspond to the first three hallmarks or fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22f – *love*, *joy* and *peace*. The fourth – *satisfaction* – while not stated in the list, is implicit in the other three and, indeed, the works of the flesh in verse 19 of 'sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry orgies and drunkenness', may be seen as human attempts to find the satisfaction which the Spirit alone brings.

The Holy Spirit is experienced as love unfathomable

Anna to William, *Notting Hill*, 1999, 'I'm just a girl, standing in front of a boy. Asking him to love her.'

Romans 5:5 states: 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.' God is the subject, he initiates love, he gives the gift of his Spirit, the gift of love into our hearts. God is also the object of love – he loves us that we might love him. That God longs for our love is seen in the greatest commandment, in Deuteronomy 6:4. That God longs to love us is seen in the whole salvation history. His self-giving, out-going Spirit is the love between Father and Son with which he loves the believer. St John tells us that God is love, God is Spirit, Spirit is love. To know God, to receive the Spirit, is to be filled with love. This love invades our heart, not merely informs our mind. The heart in ancient Hebrew, as in modern Western thought, was not just the operation centre of life, but the descriptive seat of the emotions and affections. To speak of the love poured out into the believer's heart is to speak of the experienced affective felt love which is the Christian's birthright. As a child has a right to be loved by his Father, so a child of God has the right to be loved by the heavenly Father. A love beyond sentences spoken, beyond tokens given, a love which embraces, draws near and holds dear. Karl Barth in his commentary on this text uses the metaphor of a glass which sings when touched, to describe the loving touch of God which causes us to sing when the Spirit moves on us.[5]

In Ephesians 3:14f Paul prays for the Ephesian Church:

I pray that the Father out of his glorious riches, may strengthen you with his Spirit's power in your innermost being, so that Christ may occupy your heart by faith, and being rooted and grounded in love, you may have power to comprehend with all the saints, love's depth and length, its height and breadth, and to truly know Christ's love which is beyond understanding, so that you may be filled to the full with God.

As with Romans 5:5, Paul speaks of three core things: the Spirit of God, bringing the love of God, to the heart of the believer. They are already Christians, having received Christ, received forgiveness and received the Spirit (Ephesians 1:3–14), but Paul prays for *more* – a filling by the fullness of the Spirit of love. In Ephesians 3:18 Paul prays that they might 'have power to comprehend' this love – which implies the mind in understanding; however the Greek implies tenacious strength (*ekisxusete*, meaning 'be strong enough') to grasp, lay hold of (in Greek, *katalabesthai*, meaning

'seize', 'win', 'attain', 'make one's own'),[6] which are not immediately associated with the mind, perhaps more with the will.

Mysteriously and uncomfortably to the modern Western post-Enlightenment individual, Paul says that this filling of love will be knowing 'which surpasses knowledge' (Ephesians 3:19) (surpassing, from the Greek *huperballo*, meaning 'to throw far beyond'). What can this mean? Is it a level of knowledge beyond what may be conveyed by words – a knowing love that resorts to poetry, to analogy, a love which renders the beloved sick, crazed, obsessed (Song of Solomon 5:8), a flame of love which burns fiercely (Song of Solomon 8:6), a love that will not be easily quenched nor bought off (Song of Solomon 8:7). How tragic that later, these Ephesians were commended for their labour, but not their labour of love – maintaining belief and service, they had lost Christ's love known and shown (Revelation 2:1–7). How often is this repeated down the long corridors, and between the pews of Church history? Believers still, but not the blazing love reciprocating by the Spirit between God's heart and man's. Love redeemed us to be lovers and to be loved.

St Augustine spoke of Pentecost as a baptism of love: 'a drunken love that came to them through the finger of God which is the Holy Spirit'.[7] The Spirit of love immerses us in God's love, we become drunk with love, crazed with love, madmen. The Medievals made much of God's love. The most exalted book of the canon was the Song of Solomon, which celebrates analogously the love between Christ and his bride the Church. The kiss of love (Song of Solomon 1:2) was the Spirit who was the divine matchmaker fusing our union in consummating love. William of Thierry understood this knowledge of love beyond knowing; he spoke of the Spirit's invasion of love into the believer who receives:

> . . . an abundance of grace to the point of positive and palpable experience of something of God . . . enlightened love which exceeds the reach of any bodily sense, the consideration of reason and all understanding, except the understanding of enlightened love.[8]

This love which surpasses knowledge was felt and caught by the early nineteenth-century evangelist lawyer, Charles Finney. He could speak of an experience of the Spirit as wave after wave of liquid love, which launched his evangelistic endeavours, and of which, 'No words can express this wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love . . . I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart.'[9] The

Spirit brings love unfathomable. Even as his love is not for a particular few, we all who have responded to the gospel may experience this love first hand.

The Holy Spirit is experienced as joy unspeakable

'Man cannot live without joy; therefore when he is deprived of true spiritual joys it is necessary that he become addicted to carnal pleasures.' (Thomas Aquinas)

Where the Spirit of God is, joy is not far behind. The word 'happiness' derives from the Old English root word *hap*, meaning 'chance', and is a state which is dependent on what happens, happenstance, situation and circumstance. Joy is altogether different. It is not the result of an external situation but the internal visitation of the Spirit, who imparts the awareness that we are God's children, adopted, accepted, beloved, justified, righteous, sealed for eternity, seated as sons in the heavenly realms. Under the pressure of the eternal revelation and impartation of God's love, joy bursts forth like a geyser.

The title of Lloyd-Jones' book on the Spirit-filled life, *Joy Unspeakable*, and the introduction to Jonathan Edwards' treatise on the religious affections and manifestations of the felt Christ,[10] both refer to 1 Peter 1:8: '. . . you rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory'. The Greek word *agalliasthe* is in the present tense implying a current experience, not merely a future hope. This joy of God is beyond understanding or articulating. It is not something one explains but something one explodes with. This experience of joy is, as Kelly states, 'shot through with the radiance which belongs to God's very essence, Glory'.[11] The believers have a direct experience with the very being of God – a direct experience of God's Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17–18), an experience of glory.

There are numerous biblical references to the joy which comes by the Holy Spirit. At times the Holy Spirit is not referred to but may be inferred in verses which speak of being filled with joy – filled being the operation of the Spirit (Acts 14:17; 16:34). More directly, we read that Jesus himself, on hearing the news of the effective apostolic ministry of the seventy-two (Luke 10:1), 'rejoiced in the Holy Spirit' (Luke 10:21). Paul says that despite the difficult circumstances faced by the Thessalonians: 'You received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Again in the context of rejection and persecution, God draws near and, '. . . the disciples were filled with joy and with the

Holy Spirit' (Acts 13:52). Indeed, we read of modern confessors of Christ, like Richard Wurmbrand in his book *Tortured For Christ*, who after suffering a day's torture at the hands of his Communist captors, returned to the prison cell and danced with supernatural Spirit-filled joy. They thought it a madness, but it was Holy Spirit fullness of joy – not happiness, dictated by circumstance, but joy fuelled by God's gracious presence. Such joy overcomes. Paul's prayer for the Church is this: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope' (Romans 15:13).

Blaise Pascal, mathematician and philosopher, was one of the greatest intellects in human history. At the age of thirty-one, on Monday 23rd November 1654, Pascal had a remarkable experience of the Spirit of God. He made brief notes of the revelation and in order to keep himself ever-mindful of this momentous moment, wrote them on a piece of parchment which he sewed into the lining of his coat found by his servant after his death eight years later. It stated:

Fire!
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
Not of the philosophers and scholars.
Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ.
'Thy God and my God.'
Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except God.
He is to be found only in the ways taught in the gospel.
Greatness of the Human Soul.
'Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,
But I have known Thee.'
Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.
I have separated myself from Him.
'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters.'
'My God, wilt Thou leave me?'
Let me not be separated from Him eternally.
'This is eternal life.'[12]

Pascal's note continues briefly speaking of Christ and his consecration to him. But for our purposes it states so eloquently and unmistakably of the *joy* which comes from an encounter with the Spirit. As Acts 2:28 states: '. . . you will make me full of gladness with your presence' (ESV). This experience of Pascal's may be traced, as we have seen, in Scripture and throughout the Church today wherever and whenever she opens the windows to the Spirit. In a contemporary illustration, a Roman Catholic

priest wrote of his filling with the Spirit in similar terms: 'I felt the rapturous and exultant joy of the Lord surging through me . . . like a mountain stream, pure, sparkling, cool, crystal clear – living joy began to flow upward and outward through my entire being.' He concludes his account thus: 'Jesus Christ touched me that night and oh the joy that filled my soul . . . I opened the door and seemed to float through it. Looking up at the cool crisp early morning sky, I grinned foolishly, drunk for joy.'[13]

The Holy Spirit is experienced as peace unshakeable

H. G. Wells on his sixty-fifth birthday, wrote: 'I am lonely and have never found peace.'

The testimony of Pascal is that the filling with the Spirit brings joy *and* peace. Several New Testament verses also couple peace with joy as an evidence and influence of the Spirit in the life of the believer. In Romans 14:17: 'the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. In Romans 15:13: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit.' Others simply link the Spirit with peace, 'to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace' (Romans 8:6), to, 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). The Spirit of God is a Spirit of peace.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew term for peace is usually *shalom*; beyond the *tranquillity* of Shintoism or the *detachment* of Buddhism, *shalom* is an all-pervading state of security, wholeness, rest, deliverance and comfort (Jeremiah 8:15). 'The Hebrew word shalom . . . signifies welfare of every kind: security, contentment, sound health, prosperity, friendship, peace of mind and heart, as opposed to the dissatisfaction and unrest caused by evil.'[14] This *shalom* was the great longing in the Old Testament which anticipated the Messiah as the peace-bringer. The major messianic prophesy in Isaiah 9:6f speaks of the coming Christ, the One anointed of the Spirit, holder of the office and title 'Prince of Peace', working to establish a government of peace. At his baptism, the dove, a symbol for the Spirit (Genesis 1:2; John 1:32), and of peace in the story of Noah (Genesis 8:8), anoints Christ in his ministry as peace-maker and peace-bringer. The New Testament usage of the Greek term *irene* ('peace'), corresponds in the New Testament to the Semitic *shalom* as conveying harmony, welfare, health and the hallmark of the eschatological kingdom (Isaiah 52:7; Acts 10:36; Romans 10:15).

At the Last Supper discourse, as Christ prepares to leave them, he promises to leave the Comforter, the Spirit with them, the Spirit of Peace. In John 14:25f Jesus says:

> . . . the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

Shalom / peace was both a conventional greeting and a customary farewell blessing – however, the fact Christ continues with his speech indicates the 'peace' here is not a farewell. It seems right to connect it to the preceding verse about the Spirit and interpret the peace as the fruit of the Spirit which the Father will send through Christ. This peace, from the Spirit, cannot be found in this world, but only received from out of this world as the gift of the Father through the Son. As Morris notes: 'the peace that Jesus gives men is the natural result of the presence with them of the Holy Spirit'.[15]

Peace implies an individual's internal state of being, despite situations that may be wholly peace-less. It is not the peace from escaping difficulties, but peace that carries us through them – indeed, Jesus promised both *peace not of this world* (John 14:27) and at the same time *trouble in this world* (John 16:33). Christ's peace is peace not of this world's making, but of God's. It is peace when all around could cause pain or incite panic. Not the calm peace of the sea without wave or ripple but the steadiness of a ballast-filled ship in the storms.

Not of this world, God's peace is a supernatural gifting of grace. 1 Peter 4:14 says that: 'when you are insulted for Christ's name, you are blessed because the Spirit of Glory, of God, rests upon you'. We noted Pastor Richard Wurmbrand dancing for joy in his cell after a day's torture. Similarly, we see the out-of-this-world divine peace resting on saints who have suffered for Christ. In 1555 when Nicholas Ridley went to the stake as an Oxford martyr for his Protestant biblical convictions, his brother offered to stay in jail with him the night before his execution in order to comfort and console him. Ridley refused the offer saying he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life, knowing the peace of God, whose Spirit filled his soul. Ridley slept soundly then marched expectantly to the fire, having spoken of it as his marriage day – the day he would be consummated in glory with Christ. This was not bravado, but the confident peace that comes by the reassurance of the Spirit of glory, who is given by

Christ to the saints. This is repeated throughout the great church hall of witnesses to Christ in suffering and persecution. My home church of St Aldates has a stained-glass window of Bishop Hannington of Uganda who marched to his martyr's death singing the hymn, 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus'.[16] The spirit of glory rested on him in peace.

The Holy Spirit is experienced as a stream unstoppable

'I can't get no satisfaction' – The Rolling Stones.

The Old Testament expectation was of a deluge of the Spirit on Israel's descendents like a river poured out on a thirsty land with the dry ground growing with lush life (Isaiah 44:3f). In a remarkable exchange with an immoral Samaritan social outcast at Jacob's well (John 4), having requested and been given a cup of water by the woman, Jesus offers her something in return (John 4:13): 'Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again,' but in verse 14 he says: 'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' In John 7:37f, Jesus gives further insight into this offer, at the feast of Booths. Here the priest traditionally brought a golden flagon of water from the pool of Siloam and, amidst the triumphant trumpets and exultant crowds, poured it on the base of the altar and recited Isaiah 12:3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.' It was understood by all as a prophetic proleptic act, anticipating the coming of the joy-giving Spirit. In this moment, pregnant with theological longing, Jesus stands up and, crying aloud for all to hear, declares: 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."' Understood by any devout Jew, John adds the comment for Gentile readers of his Gospel: 'Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive.'[17]

If we put these two texts together which thematically cohere, we see Jesus making an offer of eternal life, total satisfaction (never thirsting) through reception of the Holy Spirit, which is available to those who come to him, believe in him and drink from him. Now, most Christians believe and receive the 'welling up to eternal life', but few understand the never thirsting again, which is stated in John 4 and implied in John 7 with Christ's invitation to the thirsty. This phrase in John 4:14 'never thirst' (NIV);

'never be thirsty' (NRSV and ESV), includes the expression *eis ton aiona* in Greek, meaning 'into eternity', a Semitic idiom meaning 'never again'. New Testament scholar C. K. Barrett states: 'their needs by God's gift are *permanently* supplied and inwardly met'.[18] Some may say – and indeed many may live as if – this 'never thirsting again' is posited in the future and is not a promise to the believer who comes to Christ now, but a promise when we come to Christ in heaven. However, these texts demand that it is effective and active on the believer's drinking of the water, receiving of the Spirit that will bring this satiation, and not their reception into heaven. Those Christians who are not satisfied, who still thirst, have only partially responded to this offer and have failed to 'come and drink'.

Calvin notes that this never thirsting again does not exclude an ongoing thirsting after God, but rather conveys the sense that we need never again thirst because there is always provision for our satisfaction and satiation:

> Christ's words do not contradict the fact that believers to the end of their lives ardently desire more abundant grace. For he does not mean that we drink so that we are fully satisfied from the very first day, but only that the Holy Spirit is a constantly flowing well. So there is no danger of those who are renewed by spiritual grace becoming dry.[19]

A Spirit-filled Christian lives, paradoxically, between feeling deeply satisfied and yet at the same time dissatisfied and wanting more (Philippians 3:10–11). Filled means filled and no one was ever filled without knowing it. That the believer may not merely receive but be utterly filled is underlined in John 7:38 where Jesus speaks of the river flowing '*Out* of his heart' – the drinking, imbibing, taking in, is to such an extent that the believer can contain no more and the Spirit floods over like a river that has burst its banks in the Spring tides.

Throughout the history of the Church, men and women have come to Christ and found eternal life. This is the 'greater thing', but the satisfied thirst, though lesser, is nevertheless on offer and available, and vital for the believer. One need only read of the experiences of Tertullian, St John of the Cross, Catherine of Sienna, Gertrude of Helfta, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and Bernard of Clairvaux, to find Christians coming to Christ and drinking deep draughts of the Spirit who satisfies. All these speak of 'ecstasies', *excessus mentis*, rapture, embrace, enfolding, the flooding in of Christ by the Spirit, an experience beyond words which left them longing for nothing but him and heaven.

The contemporary of Wesley and Whitfield, the evangelist Howel Harris, had such an experience of the Spirit that he cried out: ‘’Tis enough, I am satisfied.’ Charles Finney on being filled with the Spirit cried: ‘Lord I cannot bear any more.’ Moody when filled with the Spirit recalled: ‘I had to ask him to stay his hand.’ Jonathan Edwards’ wife Sarah spoke of it as, ‘the sweetest night I ever knew’.[20] Note that in each case, these experiences were not a reward for faithful ministry, but a catapult into it. But this satiation is not only for religious heroes. It is an open invitation. Stephen Bradley in a Methodist church on 2nd November 1829, recorded how he was so filled with the Spirit that:

> I desired the Lord . . . not to give me any more happiness, for it seemed as if I could not contain what I got. My heart seemed as if it would burst . . . I felt as if I was utterly full of the love and grace of God.[21]

Unless we have come to that place where we say, ‘no more, ’tis enough, I am full’ then we are neither satisfied nor Spirit-filled and we must press through to Christ, unblock that well that is so often obstructed by sin or poor theology, or our insecurities (Genesis 26:18f), and drink, drink, drink of the Spirit.

Conclusion

The world longs for love, peace, joy and deep satisfaction. These Christ promises and proffers through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is not only the authentic experience of the Church, but when experienced and evidenced, is deeply attractive to the world, which longs for it. It was the gospel message of sin forgiven, eternal salvation secured and dead souls brought to life with love, joy and peace, which marked the Spirit-filled early Church wooing the world to come to Christ over three centuries.

Listen to the Puritan saint Samuel Rutherford, jailed in Aberdeen for his Protestant convictions, who wrote of being ‘in Christ’s palace in Aberdeen’ so sweet was the Spirit’s presence:

> Lord give the thirsty man a drink. Oh to be over the ears as well! Oh to be swattering [playing in water] and swimming over the head and ears in Christ’s love. I would not have Christ’s love enter me but I would enter into it and be swallowed up of that love.[22]

And again:

But Oh, if men would once be wise, and not fall so in love with their own hell as to pass by Christ and mistaken him. But let us come near and fill ourselves with Christ and let his friends drink, and be drunken and satisfy our hollow and deep desires. Oh come all and drink at this living well, come drink with Jesus and live forever more.[23]

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1 *Spirit of God*, p. 24.

2 Kapic and Gleason, *Devoted Life*, p. 104.

3 See Ponsonby, *More*.

4 See Chapter 4.

5 *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 157.

6 Bauer et al., p. 412.

7 Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, p. 144.

8 See full treatment in Ponsonby, *More*, pp. 34f.

9 Ponsonby, *More*, p. 37.

10 Edwards, *Religious Affections*.

11 *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, p. 57.

12 Caillet and Blankenagel, *Great Shorter Works of Pascal*.

13 Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol. 2, p. 311.

14 Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p. 601.

15 *John*, p. 657.

16 For stirring portraits of several martyrs see Charlie Cleverly, Passion that Shapes Nations.

17 See further commentary in Ponsonby, *More*, pp. 42f.

18 *Gospel According to John*, p. 234.

19 Calvin, ‘Commentaries’, on the Christian Classics Ethereal Library website.

20 Ponsonby, *More*, pp. 42f.

21 In Backhouse, *Classics on Revival*, p. 350.

22 Rutherford, *Letters*, CLXXVIII.

23 Ibid., CCXXVI.

12

THE SPIRIT OF POWER

> The Pentecostal power, when you sum it all up, is just more of God's Love. If it does not bring more love, it is simply counterfeit. (William J. Seymour – Father of the Pentecostal movement)[1]
>
> In a few more years – I don't know when, I don't know how – the Holy Spirit will be poured out in a far different way than the present . . . during the last few days it has been the case that the diversified ministries have resulted in very little outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Ministers have gone on in a dull routine, continually preaching-preaching-preaching, and little good has been accomplished. (C. H. Spurgeon, 17th July 1855)[2]

Introduction – engulfed in love, empowered in service!

In the last chapter we noted how the Spirit was given to satisfy the believer. God longs to pour his love, joy, peace and fullness into us, whereby all we desire is him, and profoundly know his desire is for us. However, a caution needs to be heeded. Throughout history, movements of the Spirit in the Church have often lost their way, misunderstanding the primary reason why the river of God's Spirit was poured out. The Church followed or diverted little tracts and tributaries of this river into self-absorbed, self-seeking, personal satisfaction, and lost the fact that the Spirit was given not just to satisfy believers, but to empower them to bring the gospel to the lost and needy. In John 4, we saw that Jesus offered the woman at the well a river of living water so that she need never thirst again. But immediately, she went and shared the good news of saving satisfaction by the Spirit Christ offers, with her neighbour (John 4:28). Similarly, in John 7:37, when Christ invited anyone who thirsts to come to him and drink, he said that they would receive the Spirit and, out of their heart (sometimes translated as 'belly'), would flow rivers of living water (verse 38). Jesus may well have been intimating that the Spirit not only satisfied the recipient believers' thirsting, but overflows to meet the thirsts of others

– a river overflowing, outgoing to others. In Acts 2, we see the Spirit which filled the early Church at Pentecost impelling them to spill out onto the streets in praise and proclamation of Jesus as Lord. How often have we noted that people's experience of the satisfying Spirit is to utter in delight an ecstatic 'Oh' – but equally, that comforting Spirit will soon compel them to 'Go'. The Spirit enfolds us in God's love, then empowers us in the service of the King and his Kingdom. The Spirit who satisfies sends us to serve.

The Holy Spirit is God omnipotently omnipresent[3]

Power is a primary predicate of divinity. God is all-powerful. Job declared: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted' (42:2). Jesus said: 'with God all things are possible' (Matthew 19:26). All things are possible for him who holds all power. The Holy Spirit is God omnipresent and omnipotent. When we consider the Spirit, we meet God present in person in power.

Power is something many covet and many fear. Power, according to the Oxford Shorter Dictionary, is the 'ability to do, capacity of doing, possession of control or authority, ability to act or affect something'. History is littered with the names of those who have wielded power over others, and the remains of their misuse of power. I once heard a former Nazi SS officer say: 'We were drunk with power' – a power which was used to abuse. Abraham Lincoln noted wisely: 'Give a man power and you shall know his true character,' and in similar vein, Lord Acton said to Bishop Mendell Creighton in 1887, 'Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely.' This is shown to be true, whether for emperors, politicians, petty bureaucrats, popes or priests.

But God's power, the Spirit present in power is wed to his love. David spoke of beholding God in the sanctuary: '. . . beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life' – an experience which elicits thanks and praise from the psalmist (Psalm 63:2f). God's power is not abusive because it is the exercise of his love. It is a power to create, correct, renew. Love is always the presupposition of the exercise of divine power.

The word 'power' and its semantic group ('might', 'ability', 'strength', 'rule') translates several Old Testament Hebrew words: *geburah, chayil, chesen, saba, oz, koach*, and several New Testament Greek words: *dunamis,*

exousia, kratos, ischus. These words share a general meaning and often a different Hebrew or Greek term is used to distinguish subtleties of whether power is being described as a possession or in action. Let us consider how God's loving power is seen through Scripture.

The power of the Spirit

The power of the Spirit in the Old Testament

The Old Testament primarily portrays the Holy Spirit's power as manifested in his creation and his sustaining of the world and all life (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). In Greek mythology, Hercules is often portrayed straining to hold aloft the globe of the world, while Atlas strains to hold up the heavens. But all these things God's Spirit effortlessly sustains with his breath. To quote a line from the intimidating Master Chief Urgayle in the Boy's Own movie *G.I. Jane*: 'The ebb and flow of the Atlantic tides, the drift of the continents, the very position of the sun along its ecliptic. These are just a few of the things I control in my world.'[4] Actually, these are just a few things the Spirit controls by *his* power in *his* world.

Israel's judges linked the work of the Spirit to that of power. In the book of Judges we meet a group of men especially endowed by the Spirit with power to lead Israel against her enemies: Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (14:19). This power (*ruach*) was understood as equipping them with boldness, authority, courage and ability to unite the disparate tribes of Israel and to confront and defeat her enemies. Eichrodt summarising their actions and their impetus writes: '. . . it is the miraculous power of the Spirit which is the real force behind those acts of redemption that preserve the life of the nation'.[5]

The Old Testament prophets similarly equated the work of the Spirit with power. The prophet Isaiah anticipates the coming Messiah who will be marked by the, 'Spirit of counsel and might' (Isaiah 11:2). This king will have not just the *wisdom* to make the correct judgements but also the might to see them put into effect. The prophet Micah declared himself to be, 'filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression . . .' (3:8). He was conscious of the presence of the Spirit as a power to embolden him to confront Israel with her sins. Allen speaks of the Spirit as a 'motivating force' within the Old Testament prophet, 'an irresistible power' as with Jeremiah, and a burning

fire within the heart unable to be contained (Jeremiah 20:9).[6] In a famous text, the prophet Zechariah (4:6) says that God's purposes will be fulfilled, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit'. The temple will be rebuilt but not through the efforts of King Zerubbabel, nor through the might (*hayil*) of an army of builders (cf: Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 5:13–18), nor the power (*koah*) of an army of builders (cf: Nehemiah 4:10). Then how? From a human point of view, the task of rebuilding the temple was impossible, there simply weren't the people to do it, but God's Spirit makes up for what is lacking in the natural, and his *ruach* has divine power and might to raise the temple. What is lacking for the task in hand in the ability of men can be made up easily with God.[7]

The power of the Spirit in the life of Jesus

In Chapter 3 we noted the relationship of the Spirit to Christ. In terms of power, we saw how the very conception of Christ was through the overshadowing of Mary by the Spirit, the power of the Most High joined the eternal Christ with humanity in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35f). This was a creative dynamic act of the eternal powerful Spirit. This immeasurably great power of the Spirit is exercised when Christ, dead and buried in the tomb, is resurrected, breaking through the barriers of death and hell (Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:19–20). That Spirit's power which birthed Christ causes us to be born again, and which raised Christ immortal will raise our bodies also. In both Christ's conception and resurrection, the linking of power and Spirit underscores the remarkable, miraculous, circumventing of the natural. It is the invasion of God aimed at the correction of the corruption of sin in human existence. This is clearly evidenced in the public ministry of Christ on his return from the wilderness in 'the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14). Power here implies mighty works (Luke 4:36; 5:17; 9:1; Acts 10:38). The *reports* (Luke 4:14, 23b) about his ministry relate specifically to the deeds of Jesus implicit in this display of the Spirit's power.[8]

Though the ensuing narrative does not mention again this Spirit power, this remains the presupposition behind Jesus' ministry of gospel proclamation, miraculous healings and exorcisms. Jesus' ministry *en te dunamei pneumatos* (in the power of the Spirit), reversed the ravages caused by sin and Satan, and manifested the eschatological kingdom of heaven in the present. The demonised are set free, those sick with various

diseases are healed, lepers are cleansed, the paralysed walk, the good news is heeded and embraced, disciples are called and they come.

The power of the Spirit in the apostolic mission

While few Christians would deny that Christ's anointing of the Spirit was the means of his power and was evidenced in the marvellous and miraculous, many would contest whether the reception of that same Spirit and power by the Church today would, should or could have the same outward effect. But the two go hand in hand in the apostolic Church's ministry as in Christ's.

In Acts 1:8, shortly before his ascension, Jesus promised the fledgling Church that she would, 'receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses . . .' The standard evangelical interpretation of this is to link 'power' to 'witness', and say the power of the Spirit is unction for evangelism, anointing to preach. This of course has merit; the Spirit has always anointed prophets to proclaim. However, I am unconvinced that this is the best reading of the Greek; indeed, it seems an interpretative leap not justified in a natural reading of the text. If it were intended to show the Spirit's power as *causative* of the evangelistic preaching, then the two would be more comfortably linked by *hina* ('in order that'), rather than a *kai* ('and'). Furthermore, if the power received was to be for witnessing, it would also be more natural to have 'receive' as a participle, i.e. *having received . . . you shall be my witnesses*. Now, *kai* might very occasionally have an explanatory sense (that is, namely, 'for'), but the simplest and most natural reading is a plain 'and'. Jesus here makes no effort to link these two actions grammatically, thus, it seems more appropriate to read this verse as a promise that the Church will receive the Spirit's power, a power to effect signs and wonders; these will accompany the growing witness to Christ throughout the empire.

Few follow this line, although ironically the liberal New Testament professor Ernst Haenchen says:

> Here the Holy Spirit appears as the mediator of the marvellous power (*dunamis*) which works miracles (*dunameis*). Since these were regarded in primitive Christianity as the decisive sign of legitimation (Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12), the Spirit which conferred miraculous power was a *sine qua non* for the mission.[9]

In similar vein, C. K. Barrett offers a word study on the use of *dunamis* in Acts which supports my interpretation.[10] He notes that of the remaining nine

references to *dunamis*, three refer directly to miracles (2:22; 8:13; 19:11); three refer to the power that effects miracles (3:12; 4:7; probably 10:38); two refer to the power with which the Apostles (4:33) and Stephen (6:8) do what they do – presumably understood as preaching and miracles. The remaining reference describes Simon Magus' acts of sorcery before conversion. In view of this, it seems safe to interpret *dunamis* in Acts 1:8 as referring not to power to embolden witness, but more likely to power which will effect miracles, miracles that will confirm the word that witnesses to Christ.

Of course, we do not wish to put asunder what God has joined – emphasising or elevating miracles over the gospel – rather we want to hold the two together, not losing either, seeking the power of the Spirit to anoint the Church for works of wonder that point to Christ as Lord and for witnessing to Jesus. This is clear from Acts 4:27f, 32, and the ministry of Stephen, Philip, Paul and Peter, who were all filled with the Spirit, who all worked miracles, and who all preached Christ.

J. Rodman Williams says:

> When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and thereafter, he gave power that enabled the ministry of Christ to be carried forward . . . Power for ministry is the central purpose for the Spirit's coming in the New Testament.[11]

What is self-evident, is that before they received the Spirit they found it difficult to do easy things (like acknowledge Christ), whereas after they received it, they found it easy to do difficult things (like miracles, martyrdom). In Romans 15:18f, Paul is speaking of his ministry in 'word and deed', a ministry which Christ accomplished through bringing Gentiles to obedience. Paul states these deeds were done, 'by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit'. The second sentence may be causative, the basis for the former, though this pairing may be a *heniadys* (two words or phrases connected by a conjunction used to express a single notion), thus the power of the Spirit manifest is the power of signs and wonders. Paul is clear here, Gentiles are brought to faith through hearing the gospel and seeing and experiencing the Spirit's power. In 1 Corinthians 2:4 Paul reminds the Corinthians that the gospel came not simply with words of wisdom, but in 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power'. His preaching of the gospel, the word, was itself a Spirit-empowered act, which effected a Spirit-empowered transformation of the respondents – but this

was accompanied by the power of the Spirit in signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 12:12). However, in 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6, Paul says:

> . . . our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction . . . you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Here, the pairing of word and deed does not refer to preaching and demonstration in signs and wonders, rather, the word preached is paired with the word received – the Spirit's power bringing deep conviction of sin and profound joy at salvation.

Fee rightly says that the phrase: 'by the power of the Spirit' would be understood to convey a 'whole complex of empowering phenomena' – one can identify three from the texts cited above:[12]

- the Spirit-empowered preaching of Christ.
- the Spirit-empowered reception of the gospel with conviction and joy.
- the Spirit-empowered ministry of signs and wonders.

The Church's mission has often understood and displayed the first and second phenomena, but has sadly lacked an understanding of the third. Much evangelism, at least in the West, while trusting in the power of the Spirit to convict and save, knows little of the power of the Spirit to effect signs and wonders evidenced in the New Testament. A pursuit of this focus on divine power is what has led to the charismatic and Pentecostal movements of the twentieth century, which has evidenced a remarkable advance of the Great Commission.[13]

The power of the Spirit in discipleship

We noted three key features of the Spirit's power in relation to mission above. The Spirit's power is also at work in the ongoing discipleship of the believer. Making mention of the gifts of the Spirit to heal and perform miracles in a letter concerning the right ordering of Church life, not mission per se (1 Corinthians 12) would imply that the power of the Spirit in signs and wonders was active in the 'internals' of Church life, as well as the 'externals' of mission.

Paul prayed that the Church would fully know (*epignosei*, Ephesians 1:18) more of God's Spirit's power. This was not merely to enable them to

be more emboldened in evangelism or mission. In Ephesians 1:19, he prays that they might know:

> . . . the immeasurable greatness of his power [*huperballon megethos tes dunameos*] in us who believe, according to the working of his great might, which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead . . .

In Ephesians 3:16 he further prays that they might, 'be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith'.

Clearly they did not get it all at conversion, so Paul is praying for more. The descriptions and prayers in Ephesians 1–3 are followed by imperatives in 4–6. They have a life to live and an enemy to fight. Only when these Ephesians are fully living in the Spirit's power can they hope to: 'lead a life worthy of the calling' (4:1); 'attain to the unity of the faith . . . to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (4:13); 'be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us' (5:1); 'walk as children of light' (5:8); and 'be strong in the Lord . . . able to stand against the wiles of the devil' (6:10). Hoehner rightly says: 'This power is needed to survive the Satanic hostile powers and worldly system that surrounds us.'[14]

The commands of God and the demands of the Christian life can never be met through human effort. Only through a deep personal knowledge, confidence and ongoing experience of the Spirit's power may we step up to the mark: 'Nothing short of God's immense power, available on their behalf will enable them to realise the vision this writer has for their lives.'[15]

In a similar vein, Paul in Colossians speaks of his daily prayers that this Church may: '. . . lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God' (1:10) . . . 'strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy' (verse 11). The mode of Christian living has a powerful means – *en pase dunamei dunamoumenoi kata kratos tes doxes* – literally meaning: 'in all power, empowered, by the might of his glory'. Here, glory is the noun and not the adjective, therefore it is used by the writer as a synonym for God, present and active by his Spirit. This Spirit with all power mightily empowers the Christian. God is not like the Oxford professor who once told me he sets the potential student a question they could never answer just to see how good their attempt was. God sets

before us a whole new life to live, often in difficult circumstances, but he gives us the power of the Spirit to not merely attempt it but to triumph in it. F. F. Bruce says: 'Such an endowment with divine power will enable them to stand firm in the face of trial and opposition and everything else that may come to test the quality of their faith.'[16] God expects much from these Colossians: they must walk worthy of him, please him, bear fruit in good works, increase in knowledge, endure suffering patiently and with joy. But what he expects he provides. The Spirit of power, readily available, makes the humanly impossible divine expectations attainable. John Owen said that, 'Spiritual Power accompanies Spiritual life', to enable the soul in the acts and duties of holy obedience.[17] By nature we are without the strength to perform anything spiritually good, but power is given to us at regeneration and in sanctification to enable us to live a holy life unto God.

The power of the Spirit in the Church

The power of the Spirit is effective across a whole canvas of Christian experience. He is the power which anoints the preacher to boldly and effectively proclaim the gospel; the power which is able to convict and convert the sinner; the power to regenerate and bring to new birth the believer; the power to live a life of holiness, subduing the works of the flesh and sin and conforming us to Christ; the power to stand and suffer for our faith, loving not our life even unto death; the power which will raise our mortal bodies to new, eternal, glorious life.

These have generally and universally been accepted throughout the Church in her long history. What has not generally been accepted is the ongoing power of the Spirit in healing and deliverance, signs and wonders, accompanying and illustrating the gospel. Sadly, the Church today has often selectively read the workings of the Spirit in Scripture, editing out those that either do not fit her experience or her theology; an experience that is often sub-biblical and a theology formulated through Enlightenment rationalism, which threw out God's dynamic personal power with the advent of electric lightbulbs. However, history records that the unchanging God of love and power has often broken out of our limiting hermeneutical boxes and displayed his loving power and glory in signs and wonders confirming the word of the gospel.

Let me offer a small hors d'oeuvre of the Spirit's power, drawing heavily on the outstanding comprehensive survey by Stanley Burgess, to whom we

are indebted for his collating of such a large amount of material, and which leaves us in no doubt that God never withdrew the power of the Spirit to work signs and wonders.[18]

The outstanding Christian theologian and apologist Justin Martyr (100–165) wrote of the:

> . . . numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world . . . many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ . . . have healed and do heal rendering helpless, driving the possessing devils out of the men though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists and those who used incantations and drugs.[19]

In similar vein, the no less important theologian Irenaeus (130–202) noted that:

> . . . some do certainly and truly drive out devils so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe in Christ and join themselves to the Church . . . Others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them and they are made whole – the dead even have been raised and remained among us.[20]

St Anthony in the late third century was a monk known to perform miracles and exorcism. The sick reputedly slept outside his cell and were healed, not by the laying on of hands, but by faith. In the fourth century, Gregory of Nazianzus records the miraculous healings of his dying father and sick mother. Hilary of Potiers in the late fourth century spoke in the present tense of: 'Gifts of healings, that by the cure of diseases bear witness to his grace . . . by the workings of miracles that what we do may be understood to be the power of God . . .'[21] Augustine in his *City of God* in the late fourth century, recounts numerous miracles and healings from paralysis, palsy, breast cancer, blindness and even the resurrection of the dead. He says, 'Many miracles are wrought, the same God who wrought those we read of [in the Bible] is still performing them.' Pope Gregory the Great spoke of the gift of miracles that had been given to Augustine of Canterbury to assist the re-establishing of the English Church – with remarkable effect – ten thousand converts baptised at Canterbury as the fruit of the first year's work. Gregory also noted miracles performed by Benedict of Nursia, who reputedly performed numerous healings and exorcisms, including raising the dead and healing of leprosy.[22] In the eleventh to twelfth centuries, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote comprehensively of the work of the Spirit as being, 'bestowed on them [believers] for their benefit, for miracle working, for salvation, for help, for consolation and for fervour . . .'[23] Luther in

private correspondence bemoaned being able to heal others yet could not heal himself,[24] and Calvin, a cessationalist, claimed there was no shortage of miracles evident in his own movement.[25]

The scholarly study by historian Margo Todd, *The Culture of Scottish Protestantism*, unveils how in seventeenth-century puritan Scotland, preachers increased their fame and the Lord's renown through the miraculous evidence of the Spirit's power at work in them. Robert Blair is credited with healings and exorcisms. John Welch reputedly raised a man to life who had been dead twenty-four hours and was beginning to stink with decomposition in the warm weather. He also rebuked a mocker at a dinner table who instantly fell dead – traces of Ananias and Sapphira! Todd concludes by writing of: 'The ministry of Reformed Scotland at once spiritually exalted, with power that in another setting would be called magical or shamanistic . . .' and of, 'the Protestant clergy's combination of rational text based discourse in the new mode, with fervent homiletics and visions, prophecies and miracles'.[26]

Such testimonies can be found throughout the history of the Church and across denominational boundaries. Wherever the Church obeys Scripture, believes in God's empowering presence and acts in faith, we see tokens of the power of the Spirit, bringing the *eschaton* – the rule of God into the now. These signs increased exponentially as the Church awakened with the Pentecostal Renewal in the early twentieth century.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is God present with us. God is all-powerful, thus the Spirit is omnipotence omnipresent. This power is directed to the Church, to the saints, that they might live for him and he might live through them in the world, removing the ravages of sin and death. A powerful evil force is confronted by the power of divine love and trounced. Gary Badcock says: 'The gift of the Spirit is interpreted as the gift of power to deal with the realm of evil spirits and with the malignant influence upon humanity at large.'[27] And deal with it he does and is doing. The Holy Spirit is the triumphant power for reversal. Undoing death, undoing the demonic traces in the image of mankind. It is the power of divine love that unravels and restores. As we await Christ's triumphant return and definitive loosing of that satanic grip over human history, the believer is empowered by the Spirit to live for Christ, become like Christ, and join Christ in undoing the

threads of evil. Clark Pinnock sets a challenge: 'As Jesus was empowered, the church is empowered for its mission by the Spirit. Outward forms are not enough – the power must be at work in us.'[28] That is why Martyn Lloyd- Jones exhorts us to, 'Seek it until you have it. Be content with nothing less . . . Seek this power, expect this power, yearn for this power; and when it comes, yield to him.'[29]

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1 Quoted in *Apostolic Faith*, 1907.

2 Spurgeon, 'Sermons', Spurgeon Archive website.

3 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2.1, p. 490.

4 www.brego.net/viggo/movies/g.i.jane.

5 *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 308.

6 *Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, pp. 313f.

7 Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 121.

8 Nolland, *Luke*, vol. 1, p. 186.

9 *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 143.

10 *Acts*, pp. 78f.

11 *Renewal Theology*, vol. 2, p. 244.

12 *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 45.

13 The Great Commission is the term generally given to describe the last words of Jesus instructing the apostles to go into all the world and make disciples. It is Great because of its universal mandate.

14 *Ephesians*, p. 272.

15 Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 79

16 *Epistles to The Colossians, to Philemon, and to The Ephesians*, pp. 47f.

17 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, p. 314.

18 *Holy Spirit*, vol. 1 ('Ancient Christian Traditions'); and vol. 2 ('Medieval, Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions')

19 Quoted in Burgess, vol. 1, p. 29

20 Ibid., p. 61.

21 Ibid., p. 171.

22 Burgess, vol. 2, p. 17

23 23 Ibid., p. 57.

24 Ibid., p. 152.

25 Ibid., p. 168.

26 *Culture of Scottish Protestantism*, pp. 396–400.

27 *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, p. 21.

28 *Flame of Love*, p. 119.

29 *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 325.

PART FOUR

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

13

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

In this chapter I want to address what is regarded by many as one of the most thrilling aspects of the Spirit's work, but which has become, in the last century, one of the most hotly debated and divisive doctrines in pneumatology – *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (hereafter BIS). Some might wonder why we have left this until now. Surely it would have been better coming with or after our treatment on the Spirit of regeneration, or before the Spirit of satisfaction or power. That would not have been inappropriate; however, I purposely wish to treat it here, as we conclude looking at the Spirit and the believer and as we move to the Spirit and the Church. I believe BIS is the presupposition to all I have said in this last section concerning the Spirit of salvation, sonship, satisfaction and power to serve. However, BIS can only be fully understood, not in somewhat individualist categories of 'believer and Spirit', but as the mechanism for joining the believer to the Church and equipping him or her for ministry. It is, therefore, located here to gather together all we have said in the previous four chapters and to set the scene for the next four.

Eureka

For most of Church history, BIS, however it was understood, was not a predominant theme with little written about it, until the mid-nineteenth century when many within the American Holiness movement were seeking 'more of the Spirit', driven by their Wesleyan convictions towards what was termed 'entire sanctification'. Bringing this desire to their study of Scripture, they began to interpret BIS as a second and subsequent

experience, one which established the state of ‘sinless perfection’. By the late nineteenth century the Holiness teacher Charles Parham had become convinced that Acts posited that the initial evidence for BIS was ‘speaking in tongues’ and the purpose of BIS was ‘power for service’ rather than ‘purity of life’. Parham began laying on hands and praying for BIS, and a handful of his students entered a new experience of the Spirit, marked by speaking in tongues. Teaching and testimony fuelled a growing hunger among many for this encounter, resulting in the Spirit visiting in great power a small Holiness community meeting in an old warehouse on Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906. Those in the meeting had consecrated themselves to prayer and here was birthed the Pentecostal movement, so-called because its distinctive theological and spiritual contribution was the need and the availability of a ‘personal Pentecost’, a BIS.

This movement has grown in a century to well over a hundred million adherents, with up to four times that number of pseudo-Pentecostal and charismatic followers remaining within the historic denominations or forming new churches. Perhaps a quarter of all Christians worldwide now have a charismatic or Pentecostal theological frame of reference for their beliefs. Though its roots were in the Holiness movement, and purity of life remains a core value, early on the major emphasis of BIS moved to ‘unction’, power for ministry. BIS was held to be a separate and distinct event from conversion or regeneration – though it could occur at the same time. It was a one-off, unrepeatable, irreversible divine encounter, whereby the born-again Christian is deluged in the Spirit. This is evidenced by tongues, bringing a new-found immediacy of God, empowering for service, and exercising of the charisms of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12).

Among the numerous Pentecostal denominations, the two largest and most historic are the Assemblies of God (AOG) and Elim. They make the following statements concerning BIS:

> *AOG doctrine number 7*: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit – ‘all believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry’.
> *AOG doctrine number 8*: The initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit ‘is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance’.[1]

Elim make a similar claim in their statement of beliefs:

Point 12: 'We believe in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost and in the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit as evidenced in charismatic gifts and ministries, and in the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.'[2]

A newer but rapidly growing Pentecostal denomination, the Apostolic Faith Church, is still more succinct, but interestingly makes the BIS conditional on a clean and sanctified life. They state:

'The baptism in the Holy Ghost is the endowment of power from on high upon the clean, sanctified life, and is evidenced by speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5–8; 2:1–4.'[3]

What is undeniable is that the Pentecostal movement and its charismatic siblings have known a vibrancy, energy and attractiveness which has produced a record of missionary church growth unparalleled in two millennia. They clearly have (re)found something, or someone, that was apparently lacking previously.

Surprisingly, the twentieth-century Puritan Martyn Lloyd-Jones took a clear Pentecostal position when he stated that being baptised in the Spirit is:

. . . obviously distinct from and separate from becoming a Christian, being regenerate, having the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. I am putting it like this – you can be a child of God and yet not be baptized with the Holy Spirit.[4]

He claims the Scriptures show quite clearly that any attempt to equate regeneration with being baptised in the Holy Spirit, 'is simply to fly in the face of this plain, explicit teaching of the Holy Scriptures'.[5]

Is Lloyd-Jones correct in his assessment? Is the Pentecostal doctrine of the BIS a correct presentation of the biblical material? Yes and no. I believe they are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. They are right to affirm the necessity of knowing the immediacy, intimacy and authority of the Spirit. Right to believe in and pray for a release of the Spirit's charisms and ministries. Right to see that the Spirit's power is a critical core to the Christian life and witness. However, I believe they are wrong in equating this per se with BIS and wrong to declare that the absence of evidence of charisms and absence of an overwhelming experience of the Spirit proves an individual has not yet received the BIS even if regenerate. My reading of Scripture leads me to conclude that BIS is itself just one key term to describe regeneration or initiation, without which no one can be saved or see the Lord. Available through what BIS constitutes – a new identity and new relationship to God – power and giftings for

ministry are readily released. Tragically many Christians, those regenerate, converted, born again, BIS, have failed to understand, expect, believe and experience all that the relationship with God in Christ has afforded them. Let us turn to Scripture to see whether my view is mere conjecture.

Baptism in the Spirit in the New Testament

First we must establish the correct terms. What many call 'the baptism of the Spirit', never occurs in noun form in the Bible but is always a verb, 'being baptised in the Spirit'. It is never baptism *of* but always *in* or possibly *with*. This phrase occurs nowhere in the Old Testament or inter-testamental literature, and is exclusive to the New Testament. It is found on the lips of John the Baptist in all four Gospels (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), on the lips of Jesus (Acts 1:5), on the lips of Peter (Acts 11:16), and marginally nuanced on the lips of Paul (1 Corinthians 12:13).

In Matthew 3:11: 'I baptize you with water for repentance . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire' – *ego men humas baptizo en udati eis metanoian . . . autos humas baptisei en pneumati hagio kai puri*.

In Mark 1:8: 'I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit' – *ego ebaptisa humas udati autos de baptizei humas pneumati hagio*.

Luke 3:16: 'I baptize you with water . . . he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' – *ego men udati baptizo humas . . . autos baptizei en pneumati hagio kai puri*.

John 1:33: '. . . he who sent me to baptize with water said . . . this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit' – *O pempsas me baptizein en udati . . . outos estin ho baptizon en pneumati hagio*.

Acts 1:5: '. . . for John baptized with water, but . . . you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit' – *Ioannes men ebaptisen udati humeis de en pneumati baptisthesthe hagio*.

Acts 11:16: 'John baptised with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit' – *Ioannes men ebaptisen udati humeis de baptisthesthe en pneumati hagio*.

1 Corinthians 12:13: '. . . by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body' – *en eni pneumati emeis pantes eis en soma ebaptisthemen*.

The four Evangelists all locate the phrase as coming from John the Baptist; he is uttering what God had spoken to him. John's ministry of water baptism is preparatory but also prophetically analogous of the coming Messiah's ministry of Spirit baptism. As John *immerses* individuals in water (*baptizo* means 'dip', 'immerse', 'wash', 'plunge', 'sink', 'drench', 'overwhelm', 'soak'),[6] so Jesus will immerse, dip, wash, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm, soak believers in the Spirit of God. Both Jesus and Peter in their use of the term also make the analogous correspondence with being Spirit-baptised with John's baptism. Jesus will plunge believers into the Spirit of God and they will be transformed, just as John plunged people into the Jordon and they came up changed!

In both Luke and Matthew's account, an additional clause is coupled to 'baptism in water' – 'and in fire'. Scholars are undecided whether 'fire' is to be understood as synonymous with the Spirit – a visual image of the invisible Spirit, God in theophanic form (Exodus 3:2; Acts 2:2, 3), or whether the fire speaks of the judgement Christ will mete out to those who refuse his saving gift of the Spirit (Isaiah 29:6; Matthew 3:12). Both are in fact true.

Significantly, none of the six particular BIS statements directly mention tongues, charisms or power – the very emphasis that Pentecostals would bring. These are inferred as an essential component of BIS by inviting other texts as commentary: thus, in Luke 24:49 Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are 'clothed with power from on high'. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says: 'you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you'. This event for which they were waiting occurs in Acts 2:3 when they were all filled with the Spirit and spoke with other tongues. In Acts 10:45 the members of Cornelius' household respond to the Apostle's preaching of the gospel, receiving the Spirit and speaking in tongues. Peter reported to the Jerusalem Council that the Spirit had fallen on them, 'just as on us at the beginning' (11:15), referring presumably back to Acts 2, and he equates this with the promise of Jesus that they would be baptised in the Holy Spirit (11:16).

Putting these texts together, the Pentecostal argues that the day of Pentecost for the disciples in Jerusalem was replicated for Cornelius and his

household. They claim this is normative. It was the day prophesied by John (Matthew 3:11), promised by Jesus (Acts 1:5), a day of being clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49), power to become witnesses (Acts 1:8), evidenced by the public utterance of tongues (Acts 2:4). For the Pentecostal, the absence of an experience, whose evidence is clothing with power and tongues, demonstrates that an individual has yet to know BIS. It seems compelling. But what of those who claim to be born-again believers but don't evidence these characteristics? A deduction is made that it is possible to be converted, or regenerated, but not BIS. Thus, without a two-stage initiation (conversion and BIS), one is regarded, if not stated, as a sub-standard, second-class Christian, living beneath the baptism birthright. Indeed, Pentecostals believe that this has been the very case for most of the Church for most of her history; with the exception of a few notable individuals, the Church has been filled for two millennia with born-again but not BIS Christians, until the early twentieth century, when the Pentecostal movement came to her rescue.

Acts 8 and 19 – converted but not baptised in the Spirit?

To sustain the view that one may be converted or regenerated but not BIS, Pentecostals appeal to the conversion of the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Ephesian twelve in Acts 19, claiming that in both cases there was a deficiency in their initiations whereby they were disciples and converts, while having not received the Spirit. What do we make of this claim? First, a close reading of Acts 19 removes it as permissible support; Paul is aware they had not received the Spirit (verse 2) but initially mistakenly thinks they are 'believers'. A little probing and it quickly becomes clear *they are not* believers or disciples of Christ, but merely disciples of John, having known only John's baptism. Paul instructs them in the gospel which elicits a response of faith in them (suggested by the phrase 'On hearing this' 19:5). Upon this Paul baptises them, lays hands on them and they are filled with the Spirit and speak in tongues. We must note that the 'initiation' event is a matrix including response to the word, baptism in water, laying-on of hands, reception of the Spirit, and speaking in tongues and prophesying. The question is – would it have been incomplete, partial and not BIS if laying on of hands, tongues and prophesy had not occurred? In Acts 8:39 the Ethiopian eunuch, having been baptised in water, apparently misses out on the laying-on of hands and speaking in tongues because the Spirit falls,

not on him but on Philip, who is suddenly whisked away even as they are coming up out of the water. Is the Ethiopian's initiation suspect, partial, fragmentary – has he not received the BIS? Some might say that Philip would have fulfilled the 'rite' properly, but the text suggests otherwise.

Acts 8 is trickier and indeed appears to suggest that there was something defective in the Samaritans' conversion or initiation. The men and women had responded to Philip's preaching and had been baptised (8:12) but the Spirit had not yet fallen on them (verse 15f). The Jerusalem church dispatches two Apostles, Peter and John, who pray for them, and they are filled with the Spirit. There is no reference to tongues or power, but this perhaps may be inferred from Simon Magus in verse 18, when he '*saw* that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands', and offered money to be able to have this demonstrable power. Here there is a clear time lapse between conversion and reception of the Spirit and here some see clear proof of a two-stage initiation. However, in view of the arguments below, I am more inclined to view this as a divinely pragmatic moment at a crucial stage in Church development, where for the first time the gospel went outside Israel and was received by Israel's despised neighbours. God in his wisdom sovereignly delayed the coming of the Spirit to these first converts outside Israel in order that the official Apostles from Jerusalem might have a revelation of God's work beyond the borders and bloodlines of Israel, and that these Samaritans might be formerly recognised and incorporated into the Church by the Church leaders.

Baptised in the Spirit – a rose by any other name?

The emphasis on the term BIS made within some groups is not one consistently made in Scripture. The BIS event is described variously as:

- Luke 24:49 – 'clothed with power from on high'.
- Acts 1:8 – 'receive power when the Spirit has come upon you'.
- Acts 2:4 – 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit'.
- Acts 2:33 – 'the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out'.
- Acts 2:38 – 'you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'.
- Acts 8:17 – 'they received the Holy Spirit'.
- Acts 10:45 – 'the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles'.

- Acts 10:47 – ‘these people who have received the Holy Spirit’.
- Acts 11:14 – ‘you will be saved, you and all your household’.
- Acts 11:18 – ‘to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life’.

The Spirit’s ‘baptising’ is described synonymously with the Spirit’s *promising, clothing, empowering, pouring, receiving, filling, gifting*. Crucially, Peter’s account of the event of Cornelius’ conversion or initiation is a composite of various terms only one of which is BIS. He can speak of the same event as salvation through belief in Jesus’ name, receiving forgiveness of sins, and God granting them repentance leading to life. For Peter BIS is a synonym for Cornelius’ faith in the gospel, repentance and receiving the forgiveness of sins and life from God preached by Peter (Acts 10:43; 11:13, 18). BIS here is not a second or subsequent blessing, but Peter’s assertion that *salvation* has come to this household. Note that with Cornelius’ household, the Spirit comes before baptism in water, without the laying-on of hands, marked by tongues and praise.

A study of every initiation text in Acts is further instructive at challenging the notion that BIS is understood in terms of experience of power and evidence of tongues. There are twenty-two accounts of individuals or group conversions to Christ in Acts: with three thousand added at Pentecost (2:41); numbers daily added to the Church (2:47); many priests (6:7); the Samaritans (8:4f); the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26); Saul (9:1ff); residents of Lydda and Sharon (9:32f); Cornelius’ household (10:44); Antioch (11:19); the proconsul in Cyprus (13:12); the Gentiles in Antioch (13:38); Iconium (14:1f); Lystra (14:8); Derbe (16:1); Lydia’s household (16:11f); the Philippian jailer’s household (16:25f); Thessalonica (17:1f); Berea (17:10f); Athens (17:34f); Corinth (18:8); the twelve at Ephesus (19:1); and many in Ephesus (19:17).[7]

What is clear from these is that there is absolutely no conformity to the pattern described as normative by Pentecostals. Indeed, most Acts texts are defective by such a schema as: first, regeneration / conversion, and second, BIS, evidenced by tongues and power. Of the twenty-two cases, only one (Samaria 8:9f) has a clear-cut, time-lapsed, post-conversion, post-baptism reception of the Spirit with tongues. One, Cornelius (10:44), receives the Spirit with tongues and is then baptised. One is baptised then immediately receives the Spirit and speaks in tongues (Ephesians 19:2f). One, Paul,

receives the Spirit and is baptised but it is unclear in which order (compare 9:17f with 22:12f). Of the remaining eighteen conversion accounts, none refer to the laying-on of hands, five refer to baptism but make no mention of the reception or manifestation of the Spirit; the remaining thirteen make no reference to either baptism or reception of the Spirit, simply belief in the message.

It is logical to infer that baptism always occurred – it being a dominical mandate, apostolic practice and obligatory rite for membership in the Church. However, reception of the Spirit in terms of Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 may not necessarily have occurred. We simply cannot say whether in every case they received the Spirit *as at Pentecost*, with or without the laying-on of hands, before or after baptism. Tongues or prophecy occurs in only three of the twenty-two incidents, and while we may say they are 'indicative' of BIS, we cannot say they are 'normative', nor may we say those who don't receive tongues in such a way are 'defective'. One might say that Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 are given us as the 'rule' and therefore every other case presupposes such things occurred. Equally we might say they are the exception to the rule and included for that reason! Even if these four texts are somehow paradigmatic we have shown they all differ from each other.

Much as we would like to make uniform the conversion or initiation event, BIS – responding to the gospel, believing in Christ, receiving salvation and the forgiveness of sins, the gift of God's promised Spirit empowering from on high – the fact is, no uniformity exists in Scripture. Fortunately God knows who are his, and our assured standing before God rests on several factors – *tongues not being one of them* – primarily God's decree, God's death for us in Christ, our decision to say yes to him and the change he works in our lives (*by this we know* 1 John 3:4). In the Pauline, Petrine and Johannine Epistles, not one text can be offered that even hints that BIS may not have been received, and the laying-on of hands is a necessary second, subsequent to conversion. Not one text can be shown in any Epistle that tongues is initial to, and evidence of, BIS. Indeed, Paul says fruit of character is the evidence, James says it is good works, and John says it is love for the other. Some may say that tongues, or immediacy, or power were so fundamental to the initiation event that it does not always need mentioning as all would have received it, but that would be pure presupposition without warrant from sound exposition.

1 Corinthians 12:13

'By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body' (*en eni pneumati emeis pantes eis en soma ebaptisthemen*) – all for one and one for all.

I have purposely left this text until now. Despite a claim to objectivity, one's *a priori* stance often influences how we approach a given scripture. Those who believe that BIS is second and subsequent to conversion and often missed by many, understand this text to be speaking of a very different Spirit baptism than in the Gospels or Acts. They are forced to find an alternative reading of it or be shown to be at odds with St Paul who appears to say that *all* have received baptism, with no exceptions. Conversely, those who believe that BIS is simply another description of regeneration, conversion, initiation or salvation, believe this text offers unequivocal support to their view that to be a Christian is to be BIS.

Several differences between 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the other six BIS texts are evident: first, it does not refer analogously to John's baptism; second, it adds the phrase 'into one body'; third, it does not directly refer to Christ doing the baptising; fourth, it prefaces the Spirit with the adjective *one* and baptism with *all*; fifth, and most crucially to some, it is suggested that it makes the Spirit the subject (agent) of baptism, rather than the object (element) in which the believer is baptised. Whereas BIS in the Gospels or Acts says we are baptised *by Christ in the Spirit*, it is claimed that 1 Corinthians 12:13 says we are baptised *by the Spirit into Christ*.[8]

First, as for not referring to John's baptism as analogous of BIS, nothing substantial is to be lost or gained by not including this. It's probable that none of the believers in Corinth (who were probably formerly pagans rather than Diaspora Jews) had witnessed John's baptism and to introduce it as analogous would be somewhat meaningless. Secondly, the addition of the clause, 'into one body' is grammatically and semantically similar to the addition found in Matthew and Luke 'into repentance', and in both cases develops further an aspect of baptism. Thirdly, while not referring to Christ as the baptiser, 1 Corinthians 12:13b adds the phrase by way of commentary on baptism, 'all were made to drink of one Spirit'. This finds meaning in Christ's offer of the Holy Spirit, the living water which satisfies and wells up to eternal life – John 4:14: 'whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him' and John 7:37f: 'if anyone thirst let him come to me and drink'. Thus, Paul links BIS or receiving the Spirit, with the drinking of the

Spirit. Fourthly, Paul underscores by his use of the word 'one' for Spirit and 'all' for the believers' drinking and sharing of the Spirit that there is only one baptism *en pneumati*, which is a universal Christian experience. Fifthly, there is no semantic or grammatical difference between Paul's baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13, and all the baptism statements in the synoptic Gospels or Acts. All have the same preposition *en*, the same dative case for the Spirit (*pneumati*), and the same governing verb *baptizein*. Paul is speaking of the same event as in the other six references. In view of this verse alone, the case for a second, subsequent baptism of the Spirit over and above regeneration falls down. Paul is clear, incorporation into the body of Christ, drinking the Spirit, is baptism in the Spirit and all who confess Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3) have received it. It is not the special privilege of the few, it is the birthright of all believers. Incidentally, Paul's treatment of BIS here is in the context of charisms, the very criteria Pentecostals claim are evidence of BIS.

Thiselton states:

> Any theology that might imply that this one baptism in verse 13a in which believers were baptised in or by one Spirit might mark off some post conversion experience or status enjoyed only by some Christians attacks and undermines Paul's entire argument and emphasis.

And again:

> Paul's emphasis lies on the completeness and equality of the redeemed and sanctified status of all who have been grafted into Christ by one Spirit.[9]

Dunn says that Spirit baptism,

> is the gift of saving grace by which one enters into Christian experience and life – into the new covenant, into the Church. It is, in the last analysis, that which makes a man a Christian.[10]

Nowhere outside a classic Pentecostal reading of Acts is there any hint that the believer who is justified and has received the Spirit of regeneration needs a BIS. As stated above, I believe that BIS is a description of the event synonymous with *new birth* (John 3:1–8); *sealing* by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:14); *abiding* in Christ by having the Spirit abide in us (1 John 4:13); being *united with Christ's body* (1 Corinthians 12:13); becoming a *temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 6:19); being *sanctified by the Spirit* (1 Peter 1:2); being *freed from the law's condemnation* by the Spirit (Romans 8:1f); being *justified by faith* (Galatians 3:2–5); and *being adopted as sons of God*

(Galatians 4:6). It occurs at that moment in that instant when we respond to the gospel, repent, believe and are saved (Acts 2:38; 11:13). The actual reception of the Spirit at this point is described in numerous terms synonymous to that of BIS: a *springing up* (John 4:14); a *flowing out of the heart* (John 7:38); a *shedding abroad in the heart* (Romans 5:5); *filling* (Acts 2:4f); *sealing* (Ephesians 1:14); *receiving* (Acts 2:38); *clothing* (Luke 24:49); *falling upon* (Acts 8:16); *resting upon* (Acts 2:3); *coming upon* (Acts 19:6).

Three steps to heaven

The early Church Fathers like Origen, Tertullian, Augustine and Cyril all speak of the provision and practice of a post-baptism, post-conversion reception of the Spirit through the imposition of the laying-on of hands. For them it was an ecclesiological issue of the convert or candidate, identifying with the authority of the Episcopate (Acts 8). Later it became a pragmatic way to 'finish' off what had been left undone in the case of the increasing paedo-baptism. This subsequent, time-lapsed Spirit chrismation developed in the Middle Ages into a full-blown sacrament of confirmation – a liturgical rite in need of a biblical theology.

Whereas the Pentecostals proposed a two-step programme for the spiritual life (conversion, BIS) and some even a three-step (conversion, sanctification, BIS), the Catholic tradition made a similar divide, even using the very same Scriptures in Acts 8 and 19 to justify a two-stage initiation. For them it is baptismal regeneration with a subsequent reception of the Spirit at confirmation. This somewhat parallels the Pentecostal view of conversion followed by BIS. Though both recognise the activity of the Spirit as partially given at each stage, there is the sense of an incremental or a distinctive impartation in the separate rite – both link confirmation or baptism in the Spirit to a divine equipping for service. The Protestant approach which rightly unites conversion and BIS has sadly made no key focus for the recognition and release of the Spirit in charism and power. As we will see below, my own view follows the Protestant line, equating BIS with regeneration, yet differs in wanting to affirm the necessity, not so much liturgically as 'actually', of a fanning into flame, a stirring up, a releasing, an inside-out-working of all the gifting which the Spirit posits in that regeneration, initiation, conversion, or BIS event. This Spirit's transmission may come through the laying-on of hands, church disciplines,

or deeper consecration. It may come suddenly like a violent wind, or gradually like the rising of the sun. It may be manifested with a sense of love, or peace, or power, or joy – or it may come with a deep sense of assurance. What matters is not so much the exact what, or the when, but the whether. Catholicism's own scholars have bemoaned the clear evidence which suggests that confirmation in the Catholic Church rarely makes any noticeable difference to the numerous candidates. The old ditty 'First Mass Last Mass' is all too indicative of a confirmation rite seldom followed into Christian maturity and Church membership. Conversely, BIS in Pentecostalism has been shown to make all the difference in the world to many believers' discipleship, and has proved to be a powerful vivifying force in their lives. The Pentecostals are unquestionably at the forefront of radical effective evangelism, seeing growth from zero to a hundred million in one century, something unprecedented in the history of the Church. While I may consider the Pentecostals to have constructed their pneumatology of initiation incorrectly, they undoubtedly have an experience of God where many have only theology! Pentecostalism and its sister the charismatic movement are *the* driving forces in the Church today, advancing the cause of Christ and his kingdom.

Which stage are you at?

Catholicism – a two-stage initiation: First, baptism in water as regeneration; second, confirmation as reception of the Spirit for service / BIS.

Pentecostalism – a three-stage initiation: First, regeneration; second, baptism in water; third, BIS as reception of the Spirit with gifts and power for service.

Protestantism – a two-stage initiation: First, regeneration / BIS; second, baptism in water.

My understanding – a three-stage initiation with emphasis more on process than event, releasing the effects of the received Spirit. As an Anglican, on the basis of covenant theology, I believe that baptism in water may precede regeneration and thus the first and second stages may be inverted.

First, regeneration / BIS; second, baptism in water; third, transmission – release of the received Spirit's charisms, effects and power.

Right and wrong at the same time?

The Church needs to heed a challenge to amend for the paucity of her experience of God and the pallid expression of her faith. The Pentecostals' experience of God, energising by God and evangelising for God, humbles us. They have most certainly got something the Church has lost somewhere. It may not be rightly termed BIS, but it is certainly an immediacy of the Spirit and an authority from him. Gifts and power, long the stuff of legend, they have found. *Pentecostalism may rightly claim a closer affinity to the Church of the New Testament than all those who get sniffy at some of their doctrines!*

The Protestant scholar Dunn says:

> It is a sad commentary on the poverty of our own immediate experience of the Spirit that when we come across language in which the New Testament writers refer directly to the gift of the Spirit and to their experience of it, either we automatically refer to the sacraments or discount it as too subjective and mystical in favour of faith which is essentially an affirmation of biblical propositions . . . we in effect psychologise the Spirit out of existence.[11]

The Catholic scholar Rene Laurentin similarly asks what it means when,

> . . . the majority of the 680 million baptised Catholics on the books are not instructed in their faith or do not profess it or do not live it?

He says that,

> the degeneration continues and one needs to ask what does it mean for them to have received the Spirit when these words have no verifiable meaning at the level of awareness and life and human existence . . .[12]

Unlike so many baptised Catholics and believing Protestants, the Pentecostals *know exactly what they mean when they claim to have received the Spirit.* It is sentient and self-evident. Pentecostals have done us a service, they have prayed and pursued God for more of his Spirit – they have received a fresh anointing, a release of charisms and ministries, a power and passion for witnessing to Christ, a walk in the Spirit coveted by so many for so long. *The right doctrine of many evangelicals has not resulted in the right experience of intimacy and authority*. However, the wrong doctrine of the Pentecostals has not stopped them having the right experience. They have shown that the New Testament early Church life may be known today – and by me!

There is a tension in Scripture between owning what we have and pursuing *more*. Just as the New Testament says that all believers are already

'saints' but are still exhorted to 'become sanctified' (1 Corinthians 1:2), so it is with BIS. We need baptising with our baptism. Perhaps, rather than speak of BIS as an experience and energising power to be sought, we might better think in terms of *the release of the Spirit.* Though not a biblical term, I believe it conveys the biblical truth. I receive the indwelling Holy Spirit when I am BIS – incorporated into Christ. But that powerful presence of God needs to be let loose, the giant needs to awake. I need to let him be God, be the Spirit, blowing where, when and as he wills. I need more. BIS is an inside-out movement of the received Spirit within the believer – having co-joined with our spirit his charisms and character pervade exocentrically through our soul, body and outward to the Church and the world.

The testimony of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements is of an encounter with God's Spirit in a powerful, remarkable and blissful way – a deluge, a baptism that revitalises the believer's life-bringing never-before-known gifts, a closer sense of his presence, a deeper love for him. Many, after years of being 'Christians', often dry and ineffective and defeated by sin, the world and the devil, have come to a place wherein they know what it is to, 'sit with him in the heavenly places', 'clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49), to have the Spirit fill their lips and lives with new worship, new witnessing and a new gifting for service.

If in doubt, think Latin!

Catholic medieval thought may help us to understand this movement I have discussed above.[13] There exist two categories: first, *opus operatum* – God's *work done* in us, and second, *opus operantis* – our *working out* that work in us. I propose that we understand BIS as *opus operatum* – God's work in us at conversion or initiation, then regard *opus operantis* as our outworking of that in-working. There can be no *opus operantis* where there has been no *opus operatum*. There must be an *opus operantis* where there has been an *opus operatum*. Pentecostal BIS rather appears to be a distinguishable second and subsequent divine *opus operatum* – I believe we should think more in terms of it *opus operantis*, our working out God's working in.

An awareness of New Testament norms must cause us to appreciate, activate and appropriate all that is posited in the *opus operatum*. This *opus operantis* is the Pentecostals and charismatics being baptised with baptism in the Spirit. To hold both categories in tension safeguards God's sovereign

act in saving and irreversibly incorporating us into Christ by BIS, while challenging us out of passivity into responsible enjoyable Spirit-filled discipleship and ministry.

A second Catholic medieval sacramental categorisation may be illustrative: *sacramentum* – 'the sign', which would be baptism in water. *Sacramentum et res* – 'the sign and the thing', would be the mystical incorporation of the individual by the Spirit into Christ. *Res* – 'the thing', or 'effect itself', would be the actual overflow of the indwelling Spirit in our lives. We might say that sacramentalists emphasise *sacramentum*, Protestants emphasise *sacramentum et res*, while Pentecostalists emphasise *res* – the effective power of the Spirit-filled life.

An objection might be made that this 'releasing' is based on 'works or effort' and is not the pattern in Acts of BIS, certainly not in the case of the Samaritans (Acts 8), Cornelius (Acts 10), and the Ephesian twelve (Acts 19). Indeed, in these cases the reception of the Spirit with its apparent external manifestation was none of their doing, or seeking, or willing, but a sovereign work of God, twice through the mediation of hands laid on by Peter, John or Paul. True – but in response, we point first to the lack of consistency in the New Testament Acts accounts of BIS. Second, we point to the absence of any exhortation in the Epistles to be BIS, which might be inferred as an *a priori* of being in Christ. Third, while no BIS imperative occurs in the Epistles, other imperatives associated with the Spirit-filled life do occur: 'be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18); 'rekindle the gift of God that is within you' (2 Timothy 1:6); 'Do not quench the Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:19), 'earnestly desire the higher gifts' (1 Corinthians 12:31). If the Pentecostal tradition is correct that BIS is a one-off event which imparts the Spirit-filled life, why the need for such ongoing exhortations? Fourth, the New Testament clearly shows those who were BIS at Pentecost were filled again and again with the Spirit (Acts 2:1f; 4:8, 31; 9:18; 13:9). Thus we might speak of one baptism, initiation, conversion, or regeneration event – but many fillings.

Conclusion

In considering BIS it must be acknowledged first that God is Lord, sovereign, perfect in his freedom and will not easily be constrained by our formulae and systematising of Scripture. The Pentecostal formula is simply too neat, tidy and constraining for the fire, breath and wind of the elusive

Spirit who 'blows where it wills' (John 3:8). Second, we humans are all unique; not just with our own unique personal thumbprints but with our own unique intellectual, spiritual, psychological and sociological matrices, which must surely have some bearing on the way we experience and articulate our experience of encountering God. There is never a one-size-fits-all approach, but a tailor-made robe of righteousness fitted by Christ. Third, BIS is understood differently depending on one's perspective. If one looks at it from an ecclesiological point of view, BIS may be regarded as the *inclusion* of an individual into the Body of Christ and the release of gifts and ministries to serve this body, the Church. If one looks at it from an existential point of view, one emphasises the *experience* felt by the recipient – of love, power, bathing, immediacy with God etc. If one focuses on BIS from a soteriological point of view, one may interpret it as the regeneration, initiation, salvation moment when the believer trusts in Christ and is united with him. If one is more interested in the Enlightenment phenomenological point of view, then the focus tends to be on things known through sense perception – i.e. feelings and external phenomena.

All are true: BIS is the *regeneration* of the believer by the Spirit, the *incorporation* of that individual into the Body of Christ the Church where he or she grows and serves through the *impartation* of gifts by the residing Spirit. *This is God's doing*. The Spirit-filled life is the sustaining, strengthening and outworking of that initial BIS. *This is our doing*, through prayer, study, fellowship, the laying on of hands, disciplines of fasting, giving, the sacraments and service. The Spirit-filled life may come like a flood in a crisis moment, though more usually it is gradual and incremental. We may sense the Spirit as a gentle dove or a purging fire, a cleansing, satiating river or a gentle, accompanying breath of wind. We are all uniquely made and the Spirit always fits himself to us, who we are, where we are, how we are – but he never leaves us as we are. Let us never settle for too little, but press on and into Christ that we might be a Pentecostal people. Receiving the Spirit is God's gracious sovereign gift at conversion – but thereafter the regenerate believer must bring all to bear in remaining Spirit-filled and releasing the Spirit's charism and character from inside out.

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1 '16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God', Assemblies of God website.

2 'Statement of Faith', Elim Fellowship website.

3 'Bible Doctrine', Apostolic Faith Church website.

4 *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 23.

5 Ibid., p. 33.

6 Bauer et al., p. 131.

7 See Ponsonby, *More*, pp. 132f.

8 Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 330.

9 *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 997.

10 *Baptism in the Spirit*, p. 226.

11 Ibid., p. 225.

12 *Catholic Pentecostalism*, p. 41.

13 Ibid., pp. 45f.

14

THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES GIFTS

Introduction – a gifted Church in the power of the Spirit

In the last chapter, we explored Baptism in the Spirit. We saw from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that this was the universal experience of the Spirit whereby we *all*, who have acknowledged Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3), are immersed in the Spirit and co-joined into one body, the Church of Christ. Baptism in the Spirit, though a reality at the personal individual level, is also a corporate reality; not just a mutually shared experience, but an experience which infuses us into a community. Our personal regeneration by the Spirit is a corporate incorporation into the Church. This two-fold perspective on BIS is suggested when Paul speaks of both the *believer* as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), but also of the Church as the temple of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The true Church is not constituted by externals such as buildings, or internals such as her liturgies and creeds – the Church is the gathering by the Spirit of those who have tasted of the Spirit. The modern Lutheran scholar Jurgen Moltmann writes: 'The Church is what it truly is and what it can do in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.'[1] On that first Pentecost the praying community of believers in Christ were baptised in the Spirit and welded into one body by the reception of the one Spirit. That same Spirit, subsequently received by the Samaritan Christians and Cornelius' household, made them new at the level of personal regeneration, but also at the level of corporate incorporation, joining them to that people of which they were not before. Baptism in the Spirit both unites us to Christ and to his body the Church.

We have too often filtered the doctrine and experience of BIS through Enlightenment individualist and personalist thinking, rather than at the level of the corporation or Church. Consequently, one of the effects of BIS – the charismatic 'gifts of the Spirit' – has been viewed as a 'personal' bestowment. With the possible exception of the gift of tongues (*glossolalia*), the New Testament is unequivocal in treating the gifts within the context of the Church. Indeed, the four main New Testament listings of gifts or ministries are all discussed by Paul with reference to the Body, the Church (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 4:4). Cardinal Suenens helpfully says:

> These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church.[2]

The gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit in the Church

In Chapter 7, I sought to show that the Holy Spirit in his general operation in the world released a vast array of gifts to humankind, both as part of his natural endowment in humanity as *imago Dei*, and as part of his work of sustaining and beautifying creation in *preserving grace*. These gifts, talents and abilities were regarded as 'natural', or inherent in an individual on the basis of God's design and decree. The gifts we are discussing here fall into a separate category. They are 'supernatural', above nature, and are given specifically to the believer by the Spirit through Christ. Nowhere in the major charism passages is there any hint that these are of a general, natural order, co-opted by God for his use in the Church; they are always dynamic equippings by the Spirit of the Christian for the Church. These New Testament gifts of the Spirit to the Church through Christ also appear to be operative by the Spirit in God's Old Testament economy with the prophets and judges.

In Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:4, Paul speaks of gifts (*charismaton*) which are a manifestation (*phanerosis*) of the Spirit. This term carries the sense of free gift and in the New Testament is used 'only of gifts of divine grace',[3] which are received in a 'particular' way by the believer from God – including God's election of Israel (Romans 11:29) and the saints' redemption (Romans 5:15). In 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to pursue 'spiritual gifts' (*pneumatika*), those that pertain to the Spirit and conversely not to the natural. In Ephesians 4:7 Paul speaks of the

grace (*charis*) that is gifted (*edothea*) according to the measure of Christ's gift (*doreas*). These giftings to the body (Ephesians 4:4) occur at and through Christ's ascension, exaltation and impartation – the ensuing descent of the Spirit of Christ (verses 8 to 9) giving gifts which are literally from 'out of this world' to enable the body to attain unity and maturity (verses 12 and 13).[4] 1 Corinthians 12:28 removes any doubt that these are 'spiritual' giftings to the Church when Paul states, 'And God has appointed in the church first Apostles, second prophets . . .' – no harnessing of the natural but a releasing of the supernatural. There are four main lists of gifts, or ministries:

Romans 12:6–8	*1 Corinthians 12:7–11*	*1 Corinthians 12:28–30*	*Ephesians 4:11*
Prophecy	Word of wisdom	Apostles	Apostles
Service	Word of knowledge	Prophets	Prophets
Teaching	Faith	Teachers	Evangelists
Exhorting	Healings	Miracles	Pastors
Contributing	Miracles	Healing	Teachers
Leading	Prophecy	Helping	
Acts of mercy	Discerning spirits	Administration	
	Tongues	Tongues	
	Interpretation of tongues		

There are a total of twenty-nine gifts or ministries in the four listings; however several are repeated leaving twenty distinct gifts and ministries. *Prophecy* (or *prophets*) is the only one mentioned in all four lists; *tongues*, *miracles*, *teaching*, *apostles* and *healing* all occur in two out of the four. The remainder of the gifts or ministries occur only once in the four listings. No one list is comprehensive, and it is possible that the sum of the collective lists may not be definitive of all the spiritual charisms God gives.

Space does not allow us to examine all the gifts and many are fairly self-explanatory: teaching, evangelistic, or administrative gifts etc. Those which have caused the most interest and are most hotly contested are in the 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 list, which we shall briefly comment on. Essentially, they divide into two categories – gifts of *divine revelation*: prophecy, word of knowledge / wisdom, tongues interpretation, discerning of spirits; and

gifts of *divine demonstration*: faith, miracles, healing. Several of the gifts work in clusters, i.e. a word of knowledge highlights a specific need to trust God for a miracle with the gift of faith, and the gift of healing effecting change. Because Scripture nowhere defines these charisms, my definition is somewhat a deduction and must be open to interpretation. There may be considerable overlap between the words of wisdom, knowledge and prophecy.[5]

Word of wisdom

This is not the wisdom that comes through education and life experience, the wisdom of an old person. This is the wisdom which the Spirit brings, who plumbs the deep things of God's mind (1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 1:17). It may relate to the wisdom of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18f), although that seems to be available to all Christians, whereas this charism appears to have a particularity to it. Some think it more likely a specific anointing of wisdom in a specific context. This word of wisdom was perhaps the Spirit's gifting of Solomon in 1 Kings 4:29; wisdom, 'beyond measure'! This same charism of wisdom operated in Jesus when he was confronted with a tricky question about whether to pay taxes to Caesar. If he said yes, the Jewish leaders might accuse him of idolatry (Caesar was depicted as God on the coin) and disloyalty to Israel; however, if he said no, here was grounds for being seen as an agitator against Rome! Jesus uses the charism of wisdom, saying 'bring me a coin – whose head is on it?' They answer 'Caesar', and Jesus incisively says, 'render unto Caesar what is his and unto God what is God's'. The response caused them to marvel and leave (Matthew 22:15–22).

Word of knowledge

Again, this is not knowledge learnt through education or gaining information, but a specific charism of revelation that God gives to one Christian about another person or about a situation of which they would otherwise have been ignorant, and which is like a knife cutting through to the heart of the matter, or a key unlocking that person's heart and mind to the gospel or work of God.

Perhaps this is the gift of 'seeing' which we find often in Old Testament prophets. Elisha said to Gehazi: 'was not my spirit with you when Naaman got down from his chariot and you requested money?' (2 Kings 5:26). We see this charism operating in Jesus when he was with the woman at the well

(John 4:17) and supernaturally knew that she had had five husbands and was now with another man not her husband!

Many years ago I attended a Bible study at a friend's house. During the evening I sensed the Lord impress on my mind a word of knowledge, that there was a woman present who had a gynaecological problem. I was rather loath to share this word but at the close of the meeting felt a rush of courage and offered up tentatively: 'I think there is a woman here with gynaecological problems the Lord wants to heal.' Immediately one of the handful of ladies present became very flustered and began questioning the host. It transpired that the lady in question had been that day to the hospital and been informed by the specialist she most likely had a cancerous cyst in her womb. She was not immediately of the mind that I had received a revelation from God, but rather that her friend had blabbed to me her secret. When I and the host reassured and convinced this lady it was genuinely God revealing this to me, she allowed us to pray for her. Returning to the specialist it was found there was no cancer, no cysts, no problem. She soon appeared at church, along with her husband and her son and became faithful members, trusting in a God who knows, cares, speaks and acts.

Faith

This is what moves mountains or what enables a martyr to fearlessly lay down his life for his faith (1 Corinthians 13:2–3)! This faith is not based on basic Bible believing, but a supernatural charism imparted in a situation when more than saving faith is required. This is Elijah, not a natural man of faith, who feared and fled from Jezebel, yet confronting single-handedly the false prophets, knowing that their gods were impotent, and that his God would answer by fire. In faith, he even soaked his sacrifice in water to make more of a spectacle. This is the faith which we see operating in both the Apostles and the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1–10) so that a mere word from Peter effects a miracle.

On a mission to Portsmouth years ago I met a man who mocked Christianity. His hand was covered in warts and he taunted and tested God – he informed the crowd that nothing had worked to remove them but if God would heal him he would believe. The group of a half a dozen all nodded approval at the gauntlet he threw down. At that moment I did not feel defeated, I felt faith rise – I said: 'God will heal you one week from today and then you will know.' Six days later his girlfriend informed me he was

not healed; seven days later he woke terrified, with perfect skin, and refused to leave his flat so terrified was he. Others saw, heard, believed and sought prayer!

Miracles and healing

Gordon Fee says: 'Only among intellectuals and in a scientific age is it thought to be too hard for God to heal the sick.'[6] Note that Paul speaks of 'gifts of healing' (*charismata iamaton*) in the plural. J. Rodman Williams notes:

> This is the only gift that is 'gifts' . . . Thus the one who receives such gifts does not directly perform the healings; rather he simply transmits the gifts . . . the delivery boy who brings the gifts to others.[7]

The distinction between the two is perhaps that a *miracle* would be a raising of the dead (Acts 20:7f), while *healing* would be raising someone from the sick bed (Acts 9:34f)! The power of miracles was the extraordinary power that was working through the Apostles when even their handkerchiefs and shadows removed sickness (Acts 19:11). The power of healing was evidenced when Paul laid hands on the sick father of Publius in Malta, and his dysentery and fever left him (Acts 28:7f). Such signs and wonders continue. Brother Yun, a Chinese church leader, was imprisoned with both legs having been crushed, but was told by his friend that he would walk free that day (a prophecy). Miraculously, he simply arose on broken legs, which were instantly healed, and walked out of the prison, past dozens of guards, through the prison gates which were open wide and into a taxi that was waiting outside.[8]

Prophecy

This is a broad gift, operated sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly. It appears to cover the range from 'founding' of Church, through proclaiming gospel truth (Ephesians 2:20), to 'forth-telling' words of encouragement within the Church; to 'fore-telling' the future, as when Agabus saw the famine to come (Acts 11:28) and Paul's imprisonment (Acts 21:10f). It is a primary gifting of the Spirit to his Church regardless of social or sexual status (Acts 2:17–18; 21:9). It is to be desired and sought (1 Corinthians 14:1) for building up the Church. It is to function normatively in church services. In 1 Corinthians 14:29, it is exercised by several people. Directed to the believer it is partial, an admixture of the human and the

divine (1 Corinthians 13:9; Romans 12:6), and needs to be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29b). It is subject to the prophet, not ecstatic (1 Corinthians 14:30–33). It is directed to edification, strengthening and comforting (1 Corinthians 14:3). It may be a sign to the unbeliever that God is in the house (1 Corinthians 14:23–25).

A university student was in Europe on a sports trip. While there his mates were arrested for alleged rowdiness. He had been at the apartment at the time, but the police came and arrested him as well and he spent the night in jail. Such injustice deeply grieved him. When he returned to the UK, he decided to go to church, having slipped from God. The preacher led by the Spirit said: 'Imagine if you had been a student in Europe with the university boat team, not present with rowdiness, but got arrested anyway . . . !' Most would have missed its relevance – but the young prodigal was overwhelmed; he knew God was speaking directly to him, and quickly recommitted his life to Christ.

Tongues (glossolalia)

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:5: 'I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.' In verse 18 he says: 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all.' Tongues are a normative expression of the Spirit's presence (Acts 2; 10; 19), but not necessarily for all (1 Corinthians 12:30). Tongues may be natural languages untaught (Acts 2:1–10), but possibly may also be the language of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). Not as important as prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:5), that shouldn't deter us from seeking it. It is the only charism given for personal edification (1 Corinthians 14:4). Much was made in Corinth of tongues, and much has been made of this gift in Pentecostal and charismatic circles. But it remains the least of the gifts and is but one initial marker of the Spirit's outpouring, not to be seen as a sign of being mature or gifted. Paul claims to speak in tongues more than all the others (1 Corinthians 14:18) and would that they all speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5), yet his main concern is that they are able to speak intelligently and coherently in their own language, being able to witness to Christ.

Interpretation of tongues

There is no example of this in the New Testament, but it is where someone has given a word of tongues (in prophecy to the church, rather than in

personal prayer), and someone present is given the gift of interpretation. They understand the sense of what is being said and speak in encouragement.

The prominent renewal theologian Tom Smail recalls when, as a young scholar, still new to things charismatic, at a meeting he was suddenly aware of a growing sense to speak out publicly a word in tongues. He had never done so before but was seeking to obey what he sensed was the Lord's prompting. Cautiously he spoke out the word in tongues. Immediately, a woman arose and gave the interpretation: 'There is no way to Pentecost except by Calvary; the Spirit is given from the cross.' Smail knew his Bible and his theology – this brief momentary revelation by the Spirit condensed and captured years of sound theological study – Smail's commitment to the charisms as mediators of revelation and grace was deeply undergirded.[9]

Discernment of Spirits

This is not some natural ability of deductive logic based on experience – this is a spiritual gift which enables one to understand the Spirit operating within a person or place (1 John 4:1). It may also be used to differentiate or properly judge prophecies (1 Corinthians 14:29).

In Matthew 16:17 Jesus blesses Peter for speaking by revelation of the Father. In 16:23 Jesus rebukes Peter speaking by inspiration of Satan. Christ sees the Spirit speaking. In both cases Peter spoke, but in both cases he was inspired either by God or Satan. There are *human spirits* (flesh) *demonic spirits* and the *Holy Spirit* – sometimes they can *appear like each other*! The gift of discernment helps us distinguish which is operative.

The question of the continuity of the charisms

Even as the Church largely lost the biblical doctrines of 'justification by faith' and 'the priesthood of all believers',[10] moving to a works-based theology of salvation with a dominant sacradotalism, so it is clear that in large part she also quashed the more remarkable charisms. Below we shall see that these never totally departed, but the structures of the Church and her theology contributed to their being quashed. This was something that even Timothy in the Apostolic era was challenged not to allow to happen (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Several factors precipitated this:

Clericalisation: The move away from an anointed church community where many were Spirit-filled, gifted and contributed to a community led by one or

two notably anointed individuals – priests, deacons or bishops, whose involvement dominated Church proceedings.

Centralisation: The move towards a centrally agreed, widely adopted, Eucharistic-focused liturgy. This homogeneity, aimed at maintaining unity, sadly stifled the charismatic element. The Spirit blows where he wills, distributing gifts as he sees fit – too inflexible a framework rather boxed him in, quenching his action and grieving his nature.

Corruption: The danger of errors from movements such as Montanism and Gnosticism, with their focus on extraordinary revelations or special doctrines for the favoured few, caused an understandable suspicion of all things 'charismatic', and a clerical closing of ranks around an agreed liturgy or theology.

Canonisation: The passing of the apostolic generation and the necessary 'sealing' of the inspired Scriptures into a canon, rightly placed an emphasis on exposition of the apostolic Scriptures, but sadly led to the diminishing of the place of prophecy in church. The two were never incompatible, as the Puritan gatherings demonstrated, a signal feature being prophesying by members after the exposition of Scripture. This prophesying, open to both sexes, could be an inspiration or an application of the word previously heard.[11]

Contestation: One wonders who had most to gain by the diminishing of the gifts which empower and nurture the body? The clerical professional and the Evil One! Of particular note is the doctrine of the state-sanctioned Church in communist China, the *Three Self Patriotic Church*. Members must agree to a tenfold prohibition which includes no *healing the sick* and no exercising of *tongues*! How ironic that many Christians today take similar doctrinal positions to atheist Chinese communists.

Many who do not believe in the continuation of the more remarkable charisms would not hold to my view that their diminishing was due to them being smothered or quashed, but rather that *they had been withdrawn personally by God in his economy*. This view is known as:

Cessationalism. Traces of it are found in the later Church Fathers and some key reformers, but it came to the fore through the influences of Schofield and the Brethren Dispensationalists in the late nineteenth century, through the historical Church analysis by the liberal Von Harnack and the aggressive

teaching of dogmatic theologians like B. B. Warfield and his heirs. Ironically, cessationalism has been most vigorously argued in the last hundred years, just as God was pouring out his Spirit and renewing the gifts. Church leaders in the Berlin Declaration of 1909 declared the Pentecostal movement and their gifts were 'demonic'. A similar line has been taken by many who, if not demonising the charismatic movement, have claimed she is deceived or distracted.

John Owen, though himself a cessationalist,[12] was rather more judicious: 'It is not unlikely that God might on some occasions, for a longer season, put forth his power in some miraculous operations.'[13]

The cessationalist reasoning is deductive, arguing from effect to cause, from specific observation to general conclusion. Cessationalists assert that, first, Church history demonstrates the ceasing of the miraculous and charismatic. Second, contemporary experience confirms cessationalism as *they see* no evidence of the charisms and the miraculous, as we saw in the ministry of Christ and the apostolic era. The *apparent* absence is proof that God has withdrawn them. Third, Scripture indicates that these extraordinary charisms are limited to the elite few: Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Christ, the Apostles, at crucial moments in salvation history, but are destined to pass. Such charisms appeared at the inauguration of the Church to authenticate the apostolic word – but now she is established, the Apostles have died out, the canon is closed, and these charisms have served their divine purpose and are no longer necessary. Like booster rockets jettisoned from a rocket just once into space, so these charisms are no longer needed once the Church is launched. Fourth, the Church now operates with a pared-down version of the four New Testament charism listings, which removes all those of a supernatural nature, while allowing for the continuation of those which are perhaps more acceptable to the modern mind. Clark Pinnock pointedly observes that the cessationalist position, 'becomes self-fulfilling. Failing to take seriously what the Bible sets forth as possibilities, people can come under the influence of secular modernity by the back door'.[14] That is, cessationalists owe their worldview more to rationalistic anti-supernatural Enlightenment principles than they are prepared to admit, and having owned this position, defend, and even propagate it.[15]

In response we note that, first, nowhere does Scripture suggest the gifts or charisms are given for a limited time to a limited few for a limited purpose. Indeed the biblical evidence supports the view that they continued

throughout the whole schema of Scripture and not just at key moments, and were exercised by numerous persons, not just notable Old Testament prophets or New Testament Apostles. Some have sought to argue from 1 Corinthians 13:10 that, 'when the perfect comes the imperfect [tongues / prophecy] will pass away', that the 'perfect' represents the establishment of the Church or the closing of the canon. No unbiased New Testament scholar would justify this exegesis – the perfect *telos* here must mean Christ at the eschaton, at which point the charisms cease. Second, though the Church is established, and the canon closed, three quarters of the world is destined for destruction without Christ. If these extraordinary charisms were intended to authenticate the word and establish his Church, surely now would be a good time for God to equip the Church in such a way. Indeed, because of population increase, there are more people alive without Christ today than in the previous 1,900 years put together. There has never been a better time for such charisms to confirm the word to so many. Third, the cessationalist position strongly rests on a dispensationalist notion that there are two ages or stages post Pentecost, i.e. charismatic / apostolic, followed by the Church. However, Scripture presents only one age – the age of the Spirit, in which we now live. Fourth, while the miraculous charismatic gifts authenticate the word, they also demonstrate the presence of God in the Church and his purpose to build it – he has not changed, nor has his plan for his Church. The 1 Corinthians 12 listing refers to gifts within and for the building of the body, not the external authenticating of the word. The charisms are not merely pragmatic visual aids for the gospel, but demonstrators of the nature, character and will of God, who is unchanging and powerfully present when permitted to work among his people. Fifth, as for an absence of contemporary evidence, can five hundred million Pentecostals and charismatics all be wrong? Of course they could be – but every one of them would have a testimony to the experience of the miraculous and charismatic, and unless they are psychotic or deceptive, such testimony from Christians is overwhelming. Sixth, as for an absence of historical evidence, well let us consider the following:

Historical evidence for the continuity of the remarkable charisms

Historical theology paid little attention to the charisms, often being more concerned, and with some justification, for doctrine and Church order. However, throughout the long witness of Church history, we see numerous

instances of the Spirit's charisms still operating in the Church, after the passing of the first Apostles. Again I am indebted to the comprehensive works of Stanley Burgess. Here is a succinct list of witnesses in Church history who either exercised or noted the ongoing exercise of the more remarkable charisms in 1 Corinthians 12:4f:

Late first century

- Ignatius of Antioch – stated that the Church is not deficient in any charism.
- Epistle of Barnabas – noted the ongoing operation of prophecy.
- Didache – noted the ongoing operation of prophecy.
- Shepherd of Hermas – spoke about visions and prophecy.

Second to third centuries

- Justin Martyr – believed that the prophets' Old Testament gifts are now transferred to the Christian, including prophecy and healing.
- Irenaeus – wrote about tongues, and believed that all 1 Corinthians 12:4f charisms were still operative including healings and even raising the dead.
- Tertullian – wrote about visions, ecstasy, prophecy, tongues and interpretation.

Third Century:

- Clement of Alexandria – lists all nine charisms in 1 Corinthians 12:4f.
- Origen – believed that charisms were diminishing but still evidenced. For him they were signs of power and wonders.
- Novatian – believed in charisms in present usage – healing, tongues, prophecies, discernment.
- Hipploytus – saw evidence of extraordinary gifts.
- Cyprian – wrote about the gift of prophecy.

Fourth century

- Ambrose – spoke of tongues.
- Eusebius – envisaged the Church adorned with charismata of the Holy Spirit.
- Cyril of Jerusalem – believed in prophecy and powers of exorcism.
- St Anthony – spoke of discerning spirits, exorcism and healing.
- Chrysostom – a cessationalist.

- Basil – believed that the charismata were still operating – especially that of teaching, but also prophecy, healings, revelations and understanding mysteries.
- Gregory of Nazianzus – believed in healing, miracles and visions.
- Hilary of Potiers – miracles, prophesy, discerning spirits, tongues and interpretation were a reality for him.
- Augustine – a partial cessationalist who denied tongues, but who claimed numerous healings and miracles were still evident.

Sixth century

- Gregory the Great – believed that the list found in 1 Corinthians 12 was not as frequent in operation as in the apostolic era but still evident in Christian experience, especially healing and miracles.

Medieval period

- Gift lists were focused on Isaiah 11:2 rather than on the New Testament listings. This change of focus must have added to the diminishing of the gifts operating in the Church. However there are still numerous examples of miracles and prophecy.

Twelfth century

- Bernard of Clairvaux – wrote about miracles and the discerning of spirits.
- Richard of St Victor – drew from the wisdom of 1 Corinthians 12: knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits.
- Hildegard of Bingen – associated with words of knowledge, prophecies and healing.

Thirteenth century

- Bonaventure – an exponent of charismatic gifts (as in Ephesians 4:12), Apostles and prophets.
- St Francis – reputed to have spoken in tongues, prophecy, miracles, healing, exorcism, discerning spirits.
- Aquinas – refers to the 1 Corinthians 12 list speaking of charismatic or extraordinary graces – namely those of wisdom, prophecy, healings, miracles and tongues.
- Gertrude of Helfta – wrote about healing, miracles over nature, prophecies – she drew on the lists from Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12

and Ephesians 4.

Fourteenth century

- Brigitta of Sweden – credited with visions, revelations, prophecy, discernment.
- Catherine of Sienna – claimed the Church flourishes to the extent that the 1 Corinthians 12 charisms are encouraged – she reputedly prophesied and healed.

Sixteenth century

- The reformers attempted to be grounded in Scripture and to remove themselves from medieval accretions. The miraculous, often spurious and magical were a part of tainted Catholic Christianity; in moving away from it the reformers sadly threw the baby out with the bath-water.
- Luther – said gifts had ceased and were sought by fanatics, that miracles were no longer necessary as the Church is established. However he did claim to have been used to heal the sick – including healing through prayer the very sick Melancthon and, more miraculously, raising Myconius off his deathbed.
- Calvin – believed that the gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 were temporary, that prophecy is preaching. Nevertheless, some miracles were ascribed to his movement.
- Ignatius of Loyola – was credited with tongues (loquela)

Seventeenth century

- Scottish Puritans – credited with 'second sight', visions, healings and miracles, including raising the dead.

Eighteenth century

- Wesley – recorded healings, visions, exorcisms, prophecy.

Nineteenth century

- Spurgeon – exercised healing, words of knowledge.
- Irvingites – tongues, prophecy, healing.
- The birth of Pentecostalism.

The above list is certainly sketchy, just a taster to show that the extraordinary charisms in the New Testament have never been totally withdrawn, even if they have been partially lost or denied. Throughout the Church's history, the

Spirit has renewed the gifts, most notably in the last hundred years. The cessationalist confronted by the above and by current testimony has three options: first, to maintain that these witnesses are lying; second, to believe them deceived; or third, to say that these witnesses are not referring to the same charisms as in the New Testament. Though I certainly do not agree with his every point, Pope Benedict XVI had some helpful words to say on the subject when, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he said:

> At the heart of a world imbued with a rationalistic skepticism, a new experience of the Holy Spirit suddenly burst forth. And, since then, that experience has assumed a breadth of a worldwide Renewal movement. What the New Testament tells us about the charisms – which were seen as visible signs of the coming of the Spirit – is not just ancient history, over and done with, for it is once again becoming extremely topical.[16]

Recognising and releasing the gifts

In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan comes to the children as Father Christmas, and gives them all gifts – weapons: 'These are your presents and they are tools not toys. The time to use them is perhaps near. Bear them well.'[17] Useful advice for using charisms:

1. We are not to be *ignorant* of the gifts / ministries (*agnosein*, see 1 Corinthians 12:1), nor *indifferent* to them (*zeloute*, meaning 'eagerly desire', 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 39), nor *impudent* about them (1 Corinthians 12:11 – gifts are given according to the Spirit of God's *will* and are not to be easily passed over lightly, but deeply honoured).
2. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul speaks of the charisms as 'manifestations' (*phanero*, meaning 'to reveal'). We have seen a ridiculous reductionist move in the last decade or so from speaking of the 'manifestation' of the Spirit in terms of the gifts, to the manifestation of the Spirit in terms of phenomena – like falling, shouting, screaming, roaring, crying. Nowhere in Paul's letters does he ever teach or even mention such things. These Spirit's charisms, not physical phenomena, manifest the Spirit.
3. The charismata are given 'by the Spirit, to each one, for the good of all' (1 Corinthians 12:7):

   By the Spirit: The 'charisms' are not natural endowments, latent human capacities, but supernatural giftings from God the Spirit. Their presence is predicated on an individual being under the lordship of

Jesus (verse 3), in contrast to when the Corinthians were themselves 'pagans' (verse 2).

To each one: some people have several – but my understanding of this is that every Spirit-filled Christian should exercise at least one!

For the common good (*pros sympheron*) – not to make you look good but to build the Church. The only exception is tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:4 which is seen as a personal prayer language for building up the individual, unless interpreted in the congregation.

4. Though Paul urges us to seek these charisms, they are distributed according to God's sovereign will, not human demand or desire. We make no claims on any, but seek fervently and accept humbly what the Father gives.
5. The charisms and ministries *vary* (*diaireseis*, see 1 Corinthians 12:4; Romans 12:6). Diversity within unity is the mark of the presence of the Spirit. A church full of tongue-speaking Christians without those who can prophesy, administrate or teach is useless.
6. It is Scripture which tells us about the nature, number and operation of the gifts, and Scripture must always be a safeguard and guide to our understanding and exercising of them. The ministry of the word itself is a core charism found in all four gift lists.
7. The charisms are not given on the basis of the character of the recipient. Indeed, they were widely operative in the Corinthian church, which was deeply flawed in character. The gifts tell us about God's character – what he is like and what he wishes to work in others. They point always to the giver, never to themselves or their recipient.
8. We are to exercise the gifts within the framework of love (1 Corinthians 13:1ff; Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:3–10). Paul clearly instructed the Corinthian church that the exercise of charisms must be done in the context of *charis* (meaning 'grace'). The gifts that flow from the Father's gracious love must be used as a means to express the Father's grace and love. If the Church seeks to exercise charisms without the character of charis, damage may result.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth century, a godly German Pastor Blumhardt prayed:

I long for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another Pentecost. That must come if things are to change in Christianity, for it simply cannot continue in such a wretched state. The Gifts and the Powers of the early time – Oh how I long for their return. And I believe the Saviour is just waiting for us to ask for them.[18]

Pentecostals asked and got.

We live in extraordinary days. We have discovered that God has not changed – even as he promised – that he is with us, empowering and equipping the Church, revealing his nature and will through his gifts. That which many longed for – seeing with the eye on history and the eye of faith – God has renewed in our experience. In the twentieth century, we have seen their prayers and those of millions of others dramatically answered. Through the Pentecostal movement and the charismatic movement, we have seen half a billion Christians enter into the experience of the fullness of the Spirit and the exercise of the charisms. Today an estimated twenty-five per cent of the Church would claim to speak in tongues! The rapid growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches means that this percentage will only increase. The bride, adorned in jewels by Christ, is building herself up into maturity, and being equipped to witness more effectively to Christ and establish his reign.

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1 *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. xiv.

2 *A New Pentecost?*, p. 31.

3 Bauer et al., p. 878.

4 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 246.

5 For detailed exposition see Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 347–409.

6 *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 594.

7 *Renewal Theology*, vol. 2, p. 367.

8 Brother Yun, *Heavenly Man*. This remarkable book is filled with miraculous accounts.

9 *Reflected Glory*, p. 105.

10 See Chapter 4, ‘Spirit in Historical Development’.

11 Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith*, pp. 75–90.

12 Quoted in Ferguson, *Holy Spirit, His Gifts and Power*, pp. 41, 53.

13 ‘Work of the Spirit’, in Goold, *Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, p. 475.

14 *Flame of Love*.

15 For a detailed response see the three appendices in Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 232–290. The arguments are made more persuasive because Deere, a professor of biblical theology, was himself a firm cessationalist until Scripture and experience persuaded him otherwise.

16 Quoted in Dominguez, ‘Charismatics and Charismatic Renewal’, Biblia Vivida website.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, p. 100.

17

18 In Zuendel, *Awakening*, p. 78.

15

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

Introduction – the continuously articulate Spirit

The questions I want to explore in this chapter have long occupied the Church: What is the relationship between the Spirit and the word? Are the Scriptures the unique and sole repository of the Spirit's revelation? Is there any ongoing revelation of God by the Spirit outside or alongside Scripture, or is it all found inside the Bible? If so, what is the relationship between the ongoing revelation of the Spirit to the word of Scripture? Which takes precedence? Word over Spirit or Spirit over word? How can I discern if God is speaking to me by the Spirit, or whether it is my imagination, or worse?

God is a speaking God. A. W. Tozer in a classic treatment remarked that God is 'by His nature continuously articulate'.[1] Scripture tells us that God speaks alongside Scripture. He speaks a word through *creation* (Psalm 19), *conscience* (Romans 2:14f), the *kerygma* (1 Peter 1:25), the *charisms* (1 Corinthians 12:4– 11), and the *canon* (2 Timothy 3:16). In the previous chapter we considered the spiritual gifts and noted that several of these related to a dynamic revelation and communication of God's word alongside Scripture: prophecy, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, interpretation of tongues and discernment (1 Corinthians 12:4– 11). Notably, we saw that the gift of prophecy was the only charism found in all the four main gift listings, a gift which the New Testament shows combines both the proclamation of Christ which establishes the Church (Ephesians 2:20), and also the communication of a particular revelation by the Spirit to an individual, church or situation (Acts 21:9–11).

In Acts we see this revelatory prophetic gift, which was known by the elite few in the Old Testament (Numbers 11:24–29), operating in the whole prophet-hood of believers (Acts 2:1–18). Acts forges a constant link between the revealing Spirit of God speaking prophetically to and through the believer (Acts 4:31; 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 21:11).

As well as these particular charisms, Paul is seen prayerfully pursuing God that his churches might receive a Spirit of revelation *to know Christ better*, presumably beyond the knowledge mediated by his preaching, but revealed by the Spirit to further plumb the depths of his work and witness to Christ in the gospel. This is a dynamic personal revelation by the Spirit alongside the Scripture. Paul prays in Ephesians 1:17, 'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him'. Similarly in Colossians 1:9, Paul prays that they, 'may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . .' Commenting on these texts, the conservative scholar Peter O'Brien says:

> . . . the Apostle's prayer to God is that the Spirit who had been given to the readers at conversion might impart wisdom and revelation to them, so that they might understand more fully God's saving plan and live in the light of it.[2]

O'Brien also says that, 'The full knowledge of God's will for which Paul prays comes through the insight God's Spirit imparts.'[3] Yes, they have the Apostolic deposit, yes, they have received the gospel, yes, they possess some Old Testament Scriptures – Timothy is urged to read to them publicly – but alongside these, their knowledge of God and his mystery in Christ needs to be known fully and existentially – knowing a love that surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19) by the ongoing revelatory work of the Spirit.

Scripture is the Word of God by the Spirit of God

2 Timothy 3:16f: 'All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God might be competent, equipped for every good work.' The context of this text is Paul's charge to Timothy to challenge the incursion of false teachers (2 Timothy 2:14–18) who are teaching commandments that come from demons (1 Timothy 4:1). Timothy is to teach the word, the gospel known from the Scriptures that *comes straight from God*.[4] Timothy is to devote himself to study (2 Timothy 2:15) and to Scripture (1 Timothy

4:13), to preach this word (2 Timothy 4:2), which is the gospel (2 Timothy 2:8–9), which is revealed in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:14–17). This gospel, this word received and revealed comes from God, and because it comes from God, it is powerful and profitable to equip and train the man and woman of God in righteousness and for every good work.

All Scripture

Graphe, meaning 'writing', refers repeatedly and normatively in the New Testament (fifty-one times) to the corpus of the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible.[5] Internal argument suggests that 'Scripture' includes Paul's gospel, the 'word' and possibly the available gospel material and New Testament writings at that time. Interestingly, Peter claims that the writings of Paul are also *Scriptures*, written with the wisdom given to Paul (2 Peter 3:15f). The word *all* suggests that we cannot take bits and pieces as being somehow more inspired Scripture than other parts.

God-breathed

Theopneustos, meaning 'God breathed', is a unique New Testament term – known as a *hapax legomena*, meaning 'something said once' – though it has some similarities to other words used in Judaism at that time. It may even have been coined by the author. It is a compound of the word for God (*Theos*) and breath or Spirit (*pneo*). Its verbal tense has been debated: if used in its active tense, it suggests that Scripture breathes out the breath of God; if it is used in a passive verbal form, it indicates that Scripture is the product of the breath of God. The latter is generally regarded as preferable, though Barth plumps for both meanings as being correct. Paul does not inform us of the exact manner of its being breathed, being concerned to reveal the source.[6] This Greek term was translated in the Latin Vulgate as *divinitatus inspirata*, 'divinely inspired'; and this probably conveys the natural sense:

> Theopneustos does not imply any particular mode of inspiration such as some form of divine dictation. Nor does it imply the suspension of the normal cognitive faculties of the human authors. On the other hand it does imply something quite different from poetic inspiration . . . the sacred scriptures are all expressive of the mind of God.[7]

This text finds a parallel in 2 Peter 1:20–21: 'we know that no prophecy of scripture was ever produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (cf: Zechariah 7:12; Nehemiah

9:20; 1 Peter 1:10f). In a context where there are those who wish to undermine or twist the Scriptures to their own end (2 Peter 3:16), Peter reminds them that *no* Old Testament prophecy originated from human imagination or initiation; the prophets were not the source of their prophecies, they were merely spokesmen for God. What they spoke and recorded in Scripture came to them and through them by the action and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.[8]

Summarising, Paul says that all Scripture (*graphe*) is inspired by God, breathed by his Spirit. Scripture refers to the Old Testament writings but is inter-wed in Timothy's letters, with the 'word', the gospel of Christ unto salvation. Peter says that the revelation of the Old Testament prophets came by the Spirit and are recorded in Scripture (*graphes*); Peter regards Paul's writings as Scripture (*graphas*), and thus Spirit-originated. These Scriptures, this prophecy, this 'word of God', this gospel, is to be studied, to be heralded, and to be defended against false teaching.

From inspired Old Testament Scriptures to New Testament

The notion of the Scriptures' divine origin – the Spirit inspiring the prophetic utterances and the scribal tradition of copying and collating – was held in Judaism and asserted by notable first-century Jewish scholars such as Philo and Josephus. This concept of 'inspiration' was taken by the early Church to speak of the Old Testament, but also to describe the increasing corpus of New Testament apostolic writings.[9] The Gospel of Barnabas stated that the Old Testament was written by the voice of the Holy Spirit. Clement of Rome declared Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to be written 'in the Spirit'; he also felt he himself wrote by the Spirit and his letter was regarded for some time as authoritative Scripture by many. The mid-second-century Muratorian fragment claimed all things in the Gospels were 'declared by one sovereign Spirit'. Justin Martyr said Scripture was given by God, through the word or through the Spirit: men wrote, played by the Spirit as a bow on an instrument (such as a harp or lyre) revealing the knowledge of divine and heavenly things.

Athenagorus, in similar Platonic terms to Justin, spoke of the divine Spirit enabling men to proclaim and give us written testament to know his will. Irenaeus said the New Testament authors had plenary inspiration, the Holy Spirit coming upon them and investing them with power from on high and equipping them with the perfect capacity for knowledge, keeping them from

mistakes or words that could mislead. Against the more passive Platonic view where the prophet was merely a receptacle for revelation, he said this inspiration did not destroy the natural qualities of the recipient, their individuality remaining intact. Origen also spoke of the Spirit contacting with the souls of prophets to give divine messages. He noted that the Holy Spirit did not cloud or confuse the individual writer's natural powers and cited the preface to Luke's Gospel to this effect. Augustine declared the Holy Spirit stimulated the memories of the gospel evangelists to preserve them from error in their record. Chrysostom cited the rather mundane name listing in Romans 16 as evidence of the Spirit's infusion with the human situation: 'every word spoken by the Spirit hiding treasures of wisdom'.

There were numerous 'scriptures' being written in the early centuries of the Church. Five centuries after the canon was closed, in the ninth century, Photius listed 280 non-canonical books claimed to have been written by biblical writers. Increasingly groups of sacred texts were collated and collected; those regarded as *apostolic* – coming from an Apostle or with an Apostle's imprimatur; those *Catholic* – used widely throughout the Church; those *historic* – with a long history of use; those *orthodox* – agreeing with the apostolic rule of faith. There was little significant discussion about what was meant by 'inspiration' – their usage was evidence that they were inspirational. With the passing of the apostolic generation, with the ongoing incursion of heresies like Gnosticism and Docetism which produced their own scriptures, with the growing centralisation and institutionalisation of the Church, and even the advent of technology enabling the binding of large codices, moves were made to fix a canon or rule of the New Testament faith, much as the Old Testament had been fixed. A fairly stable collection was known and used by the mid-third century – the problem was not so much what was included but what was left out. Several church groups argued for the addition of other favoured texts, many of a Gnostic nature. By the Council of Laodicea in 363, all twenty-six books of the New Testament were affirmed, except Revelation. By 367 Bishop Athanasius sent a 'round robin', affirming all the twenty-seven books as we now have them. The Synod of Rome of 382 declared the twenty-seven New Testament books, and the Council of Carthage stated that none but these were authoritative. This group of twenty-seven were held to be uniquely anointed and authoritative – other religious texts and subsequent writings may be used as useful and insightful, but these twenty-seven, like the thirty-

nine Old Testament writings, alone bore the inspired imprint of the finger of God. These twenty-seven were regarded as uniquely God-breathed. There was nothing symbolic in the fact that only twenty-seven were finally settled upon – but all other contenders simply failed to meet the criteria for inclusion. Presumably we must also acknowledge that the Church in her deliberations and collations was also inspired by the Spirit to recognise what were the inspired twenty-seven.

Word is Spirit or Word and Spirit

Having recognised those sacred writings uniquely scribed by the Spirit, we must return again to our initial questions: What is the ongoing Spirit's role in revelation? Is he still speaking new things? How does the Spirit continue to interact with the Scriptures? Is the Spirit tied to Scripture or able to speak independently of it? Is the word to be interpreted by the Spirit, or the Spirit by the word?

Even as Paul and Peter sought to resist and rebuke the incursion of heresy by appealing to the inspiration and foundation of the Scriptures, so the very move to form the canon was motivated by an attempt to control the excesses and errors of claimed inspirations by movements such as the Montanists and Gnostics. Their claimed revelations were to be tested by submitting them to a higher authority, that of apostolic canonical Scripture. The formation of a canon, the centralisation of the Church and the conformation to a set liturgy centred around Scripture and the Eucharist, led to some diminishing of claimed prophetic utterances. From the Fathers to medieval Catholicism, it was the Church and her Councils that were understood to be the sole authority and repository of right interpretation and application of Scripture. In a widely illiterate society, where only the wealthy educated elite or those in religious orders had access to the scriptural texts, few could question the Church's control and interpretation of the Scripture.

Reformation – biblical, radical, spiritual

The advent of printing, the spread of literacy, the distribution of Scriptures and scriptural tracts, fuelled the Reformation. Study of texts, the rather innovative idea of 'sermons on the texts', led people to question the received interpretation and application by the Church. The awakening to the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers energised the Reformation

as they too, not just the priest or the Church Catholic and historic, could read this word. When they did, many saw different things than they had hitherto been told! Whereas previously the 'Church by tradition' interpreted the word, now the Reformation developed around 'the Spirit and the word' interpreted by the individual.

The Spirit outside the Word

In the heady continental atmosphere of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the growing religious freedom and breakaway from the authoritarianism of Rome, various religious groups arose with their own spiritual and theological insights. While the so-called 'magisterial reformers' like Luther and Calvin emphasised *sola scriptura* and devoted themselves to its systematisation and exposition – other radicals, like the Anabaptist Muntzer (1489–1525), or Carlstadt (1480–1541), encouraged a more mystical spiritual religion, led by the internal Spirit. They made a distinction between the o*uter word* (Scripture) and the *inner word* (the Spirit), stating that the mature Christian, who is a temple of the Spirit, may leave behind the outer word of Scripture and tune in to the inner. Carlstadt stated: 'I do not need the outward witness [Scripture], I want to have the testimony of the Spirit within me as it was promised by Christ.' Muntzer said that the Scriptures had a purely preparatory role, slaying the believer so that he may respond truly to the Spirit and so adhere to that inner word.[10]

Luther was understandably sniffy towards them, complaining that with them it was all, 'Geist, Geist, Geist . . .' yet ironically, these radicals had done away with the 'very bridge by which the Holy Spirit can come . . .' namely the outward ordinances of sacrament and the preached word of God from Scriptures.[11] The views of the so-called radical reformers, enthusiasts and spiritualists were not dissimilar to those of the second-century Gnostics, with their secret knowledge and mysteries, or the seventeenth-century English Quakers, who emphasised the 'inner light' of personal revelation which took precedence over the word. They can possibly be likened to some twentieth-century Pentecostals, who emphasise the dynamic charismatic word (*rhema*) over the written word (*logos*) – a misunderstanding and mishandling of interchangeable synonymous Greek terms.

The Spirit inside the Word

In response to such things, Luther almost equated the Spirit with the word. The Word who is Christ, revealed by the Spirit in Scripture, the Word of God, is known only through the Spirit-directed, Spirit-preached or Spirit-read word. This indeed was a tendency throughout Protestantism, to tie the two together so as to be, as Badcock says: 'virtually indistinguishable'.[12] Luther claimed an individual must *first hear the word* and then the Holy Spirit went to work. The Spirit worked in the hearts of whom he willed and how he willed, but 'never without the Word'.[13] Calvin similarly states: 'Word and Spirit belong inseparably together.'[14] The word is *the* instrument by which God dispenses the illumination of his Spirit to the believer. Calvin claims the Spirit of Christ had in certain measure dictated the words of Scripture through the Apostles who were genuine scribes of the Holy Spirit and their writings are therefore to be considered oracles of God.[15] Calvin says: 'the Holy Spirit so inheres in his Truth, which he expresses in scripture, that only when its proper reverence and dignity are given to the word does the Holy Spirit show forth His power . . .'[16] If not substituting the word for the Spirit, the word is elevated almost to a fourth hypostasis in the Godhead. A similar line is taken today by many evangelicals who restrict the Spirit's speaking to Scripture and through the ministry of the word. Consequently the Spirit, though author of Scripture, becomes subordinated to Scripture, losing the aseity due his divinity.

If we accept that the Spirit was speaking to the Church when the canon was collated, speaks to the preacher expounding the text (1 Peter 4:11), and to the reader encountering Scripture, we may not logically claim that the Spirit is unable to operate independently, outside Scripture.

It is a form of biblical positivism which is posited then vehemently defended but which cannot be supported in the Bible the evangelical rationalists seek to defend! Bloesch rightly says: 'The Spirit clearly has precedence, since the Bible was produced by the inspiration of the Spirit and the Spirit uses the Bible to bring sinners to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.'[17]

The Spirit alongside the Word

This view characterised the English Puritans who understood the Spirit's subjective witness through the objective witness of Scripture. Though the Scriptures were scribed by the Spirit, he needs to activate them to the benefit and revelation of the preacher, reader or listener. John Owen in this

regard mentions the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who read Scripture but could not understand it unless someone guided him. Philip needed to open Scripture to him, but the Spirit needed to open his heart that he might understand it.[18] We have Scripture, but we need the operation and illumination of the Spirit to give us light, understanding and wisdom (2 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:7; Colossians 1:9; 1 John 2:20).

Richard Sibbes spoke of the 'Double Light' – the conjunction of the Spirit within him and the Spirit within the word, before he could see anything in Scripture. That Spirit 'doth not breathe contrary notions' . . . 'the Spirit goes along with the word and makes it work'.[19] Like the radical reformers, the Puritans also believed in their 'inner testimony', spiritual apprehensions, extra to scriptural truth, but unlike the reformers, such revelations had to be brought to the benchmark of Scripture and be consistent with it. Oliver Cromwell spoke of personal revelations by the Spirit in terms of 'More Light'. He said: 'God speaks without a written word sometimes, yet accordingly to it.'[20] Samuel Petto could speak of how, 'the Spirit witnesseth more immediately by itselfe: I say by itselfe not in opposition to the written word . . .'[21] This was a marked feature of Puritanism, but it was not always welcomed and elicited the rebuke from the Scottish Presbyterian theologian Robert Baillie for their 'contemplations of God without scripture'.[22]

Against the dangerous Quaker doctrine which instructed the believer to 'try the scriptures by the Spirit and not the Spirit by the scripture', Baxter rightly inverted: 'We must not try the scriptures by our most spiritual apprehensions but our apprehensions by the scriptures because they and not we are the foundations of the Church.'[23] Presumably, to try and test such *apprehensions* means he believed that they were still given by the operation and revelation of the Holy Spirit – not to be instantly rejected out of hand, but tested to see if they were of the Lord. One of the greatest Puritan scholars, William Perkins, wrote in his commentary on St John's Revelation of the possibility of ongoing revelations and trances in which the Spirit reveals divine enlightenment to the individual:

> The action of the Holy Ghost on the mind *is* [current tense] to draw it from fellowship with the body and all the senses that so the Spirit of God may enlighten it with divine light that it may understand the things which are revealed to it – as we see in other ecstasies and Trances of the Prophets and Apostles.

He further comments:

. . . and thus we see what a Trance is, namely an extraordinary powerful work of the Spirit upon the whole man, calling the body into a dead sleep and making the mind fit to receive the things which revealed unto it of the Lord.[24]

However, Perkins was no radical enthusiast, he cautions that such trances, though they may come, are not to be searched after, but rather, 'every good minister should be a good text man'. Yes, there are revelations and trances, but when they come they are to be brought to the bar of the Bible.

Subsequent Church history and reflection added little to the spectrum: *Spirit outside the word*, *Spirit alongside the word*, *Spirit inside the word*. Protestantism divided in the nineteenth century between the liberal tradition and the fundamentalist evangelicals. The former, influenced by a historical critical method and rationalist anti-supernaturalism, somewhat drained the Scriptures of inspiration through their search for historical errors, internal contradictions and rejection of the supernatural and prophetic, eventually concluded that the main working of the Spirit was in society and humanity at large. In response the fundamentalists collapsed the Spirit into the word and fought vigorously for a form of plenary inspiration that was in danger of overlooking in part the human partnership with the Spirit in writing Scripture. In the twentieth century the neo-orthodox movement sought to steer a middle way by asserting that Scripture is a unique record of revelation to God in Christ which 'becomes' the word of God dynamically by the action of the Spirit through the preaching or reading of the word to the individual. Liberals thought them fundamentalist because of their emphasis on the word, fundamentalists thought them liberal because they said that revelation was dynamic and personal and therefore Scripture 'became' the word of God only in encounter. My own view is that the Puritans are probably our most reliable guides.

Conclusion

Holy Scripture claims to be inspired by God. Jesus believed this, the Apostles believed this, the early Church Fathers believed this, and we therefore should believe it. God has signally spoken through his prophets and pre-eminently through his son Jesus Christ. The authors and scribal editors of Scripture may or may not always have recognised they were working on and writing sacred God-inspired texts, but the Church recognises this. For nearly two millennia, God's Spirit who breathed this word continues to illuminate and activate this word to the hearts and minds

of those who hear and read it. It is the fixed, normative, unchanging, unchallenged word of God.

The Spirit who inspired Holy Scripture tells us that he speaks outside Holy Scripture. In Scripture we read of revelatory gifts of the Spirit from words of knowledge and wisdom, through prophecy to evangelistic preaching and teaching.

Tested by the apostolic deposit and scriptural revelation, these are nevertheless ongoing dynamic voicings of the Spirit to and through his Church. To silence or stifle the voice of God by limiting it to Scripture is to leap beyond the claim of Scripture, to undermine the very nature and work of the Spirit, to hamstring the Church, and is even in danger of idolatrously replacing the Spirit with Scripture.

The radical reformers seriously erred by abandoning the word for the Spirit; emphasising the *Spirit outside the word.* The reformers were rather too restricting, subordinating the Spirit to the word – the *Spirit inside the word*. The Puritans found the middle-way, the *Spirit alongside the word*, truly holding word and Spirit together, recognising that the Spirit wrote Scripture, inspired its presentation and reading, and applied it personally to the individual. But they also understood that the Spirit's word was heard outside but alongside Scripture, though never in founding new doctrine. Because the Spirit is unchanging, and because the Scriptures are closed, what he reveals must be consistent with what he has previously revealed. However, the Spirit can and does give directions, impressions, apprehensions and visions for the encouraging and exhorting of God's people.

Bloesch rightly says that our knowledge of God as well as our redemption by God lie in a coalescence of the word and Spirit . . . the word is animated by the Spirit and the Spirit always directs us to the word.[25]

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1 'Speaking Voice' (Chapter 6 of *Pursuit of God*), reproduced on the World Invisible website.

2 *Letter to the Ephesians*, p. 117.

3 *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 22.

4 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 570.

5 Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 490f.

6 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 566.

7 Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, p. 491.

8 Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 234.

9 The following treatment draws heavily on Bethune-Baker, *Introduction to Early Christian Doctrine*, pp. 43–49 and Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 61–64.

10 See G. Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, pp. 88f.

11 Ibid., p. 88.

12 Ibid., p. 95.

13 Kepler, *Table Talk of Martin Luther*, p. 143.

14 McNeill, 1.9.3.

15 Ibid., 4.8.8–9.

16 Ibid., 1.9.3.

17 *Holy Spirit*, pp. 57f.

18 John Owen, 'Work of the Spirit', in Goold, *Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, p. 161.

19 Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, p. 23.

20 Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Letter 11.

21 Quoted in Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, pp. 24f.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 28.

24 'A Godly and Learned Exposition or Commentary on the First Three Chapters of Revelation', pp. 41–42.

25 *Holy Spirit*, p. 279.

16

THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Introduction – the Spirit sings a new song

We are accustomed to thinking of worship as an activity of the spirit of man. And so it is. But it is an exciting thought that it is also an activity of the Spirit of God . . . the distinguishing mark of God's people is the particular way in which they worship, namely by the Spirit.[1]

Worship is man's highest call and privilege. The Spirit enables worship and makes us worshippers. Whenever the Spirit fills an individual or a people, worship and praise ensue. The Spirit is a singing Spirit – revealing Christ, touching our hearts, opening our mouths in praise. The litmus test of any claim to revelation or encounter with the Spirit is whether I worship God more. Worship and praise are the hallmarks of every spiritual renewal. New insights, new revelations, new moves of the Spirit, new encounters bring new songs – though what may be new to us is as old as God revealed in Christ and his word.

The sixteenth-century Reformation produced new songs from Luther; the 1730s evangelical awakening produced new songs from Charles Wesley; the 1880s Moody revival in Britain produced new songs from Sankey; the 1900s Pentecostal revival produced a host of new songs included in their *Redemption Hymnal*; Billy Graham's 1950s revival ministry brought new songs from Beverly Shea; the 1980s charismatic revival produced new songs from Kendrick, the Vineyard, Bowater et al; the late 1990s youth awakening brought new songs from Redman, Hughes, Layzell et al. If we keep in step with the Spirit, we will always be singing new spiritual songs.

Glorifying God in Trinity in glory

The consummation of the Christian life is worship. Worship is communion with God. The Holy Spirit is God out breathed to draw us into himself. The worship God deserves and demands is the worship he delivers by the Spirit. The Spirit makes worship happen. Worship is giving God glory (*doxazo*). This glorifying is at the heart of the trinitarian relationship. The Father glorifies the Son (John 17:1), the Son glorifies the Father (John 17:4), and the Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14). We are created to dwell in this glory (Romans 3:23), to give God glory (Romans 1:21–23), and then as reprobate redeemed to give God glory (2 Corinthians 4:15; Ephesians 1:12, 14; 2 Thessalonians 1:10), and to be renewed in his glory (Romans 8:30; 2 Corinthians 3:17f; 4:17). The Spirit is the one who enables us to glorify God and receive his glory. Worship fulfils our destiny and our humanity. The unimaginable goal of salvation is reciprocating communion with the godhead. Consummation, mutual glorification.

Tom Torrance says:

> In our worship the Holy Spirit comes forth from God, uniting us to the response and obedience and faith and prayer of Jesus, and returns to God, raising us up in Jesus to participate in the worship of heaven and in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity.[2]

Scripturally, worship is generally to the Father, through the Son by the Spirit, although at times Christ himself is directly worshipped (Matthew 2:11; 28:9). The Spirit facilitates worship, having revealed and applied Christ to us, acting as a conduit, stirring our hearts, sanctifying our lives, forming our prayers and praise, offering these to God through the Blood of Christ. Without the work of the Spirit our worship and prayer would be idolatrous. Christian worship is unique because of two factors; it worships Christ the Lord, and it worships by the Spirit, the Lord. Now, though the Spirit is God, co-equal with the Son and Father in divinity and sovereignty, strangely he is never biblically the object of our worship. He is the vehicle, he gives us the voice, but he is not directly the focus. He enables us to adore God as Father, to exalt Christ as Lord, but never takes centre stage, preferring to be production manager. However, the Nicene Creed (381) rightly acknowledges that the Spirit, 'with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified'. The sixth-century Athanasian Creed states: 'Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.'[3] Thus, even when the Father or the Son are the object of devotion, whatever is given to the one is received by the others, for it is God who is worshipped.

The Spirit who elicits worship

John 4:23f: ‘A time is coming and has now come when true worshippers will worship [*proskunetai proskunesousin*] the Father in Spirit and Truth [*en pneumati kai aletheia*] for they are the worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and Truth.’

In the remarkable narrative of the woman at the well, having perceived Christ to be a prophet through his inside knowledge of her sexual familial relations, the Samaritan woman raises an issue which had long occupied her people and divided them from the Jews. Samaritans believed the one sanctuary which God ordained in the Deuteronomic laws was not to be located in Jerusalem, but on Mount Gerizim where they now stood. Jesus answers that *a time has come* – through his coming and imminent death (John 2:19) – *when God will be worshipped neither on Mount Zion*, *nor on this mountain*, *but true worship will be offered in Spirit and truth*. The place is no longer the point. What constitutes worship is not the where, but the who and the how – the how is determined by the Spirit and truth. God is not restricted corporeally or spatially – worship of him which is his due and which he desires is, ‘set over against a cult restricted to one sanctuary’.[4] God is Spirit, therefore worship which connects to him is not formulated by external categories of place and performance (Acts 17:24), but must rather be by the human spirit, through the action of the Holy Spirit, connecting to God as Spirit.

To worship in ‘truth’ has several layers of meaning. Elsewhere John tells us that Jesus came full of truth (1:14), Jesus is the truth (14:6), the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 1 John 5:6), who guides us in all truth (16:13), and God’s word is truth (17:17). Worship in truth is evangelical worship – worship through Christ, worship according to the Spirit’s revelation of truth revealed in Christ, worship according to the Spirit’s work of making us new that we might enter the kingdom (John 3), worship according to God’s truthful word. *To worship in truth* is not speaking so much of an authentic, honest, heartfelt integrity, though that must exist, it is primarily to speak of *Spirit-led*, *Christ-centred*, *Christ-opened*, *word-directed gospel worship*. Andrew Murray says: ‘All worshippers are not true worshippers.’[5] A lot that may look like worship may be neither spiritual nor truthful. The criteria is whether it is worship from our spirit, led and fed by the Holy Spirit, connecting to God the Spirit through the truth of the Person and Work of Christ, who has opened up the way of worship.

The worship God requires is the worship God makes possible – he gives us the Spirit, he reveals to us the truth. H. B. Swete helpfully says:

> 'The spiritual worship which is claimed demands a spiritual force which is not innate in man; to worship in spirit and truth is possible only through the Spirit of God.'[6]

How quick we are to think the 'place' – be it our Mount Zion or Mount Gerizim – is all-important. How quick we are to beautify the externals of the building without looking to the internals of the soul. John Owen, protesting against the Church's making much of buildings and externals says:

> 'What poor low thoughts have men of God and his ways, who think there lies an acceptable glory and beauty in a little paint.'[7]

Hebrews 9 details the worship of the old covenant. Worship in a place, God behind a curtain, known only by incense, accessed through bloody sacrifices and ritual washings facilitated by priests. But this was always only a shadow, a type of that true worship, through the sacrifice once and for all of Christ, by his Spirit, through the waters of baptism, with everyone a priest and everyone a temple. Tragically, how quick we are to abandon this spiritual truthful worship, like the Galatians returning to the shadows of law, ritual and externals. Rightly did Paul state: 'For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in Spirit' (Philippians 3:3). The term Paul uses for worship / minister, *latreuontes*, was almost exclusively used in the Old Testament for the work of the Levites at the temple. True worship comes through circumcision of the heart, not of the flesh, it is spiritual not physical, internal not external. The Levitical temple worship and obedience to the Torah is replaced by spiritual worship through God's making our hearts clean, and writing his law on them by the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18–20:

> . . . do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

The parallel Paul makes between being filled with the Spirit and drunk on wine does not so much concern the phenomena (staggering, falling, being speech-affected), but relates to 'possession'. Rather than be possessed, under the influence of alcohol, the believer should be possessed, under the influence of, and filled with God's Spirit. When one is, one worships. The

tense employed is imperative and present continuous – this should be a normal state of affairs. There is no full stop in the Greek, thus Paul's reference to praise indicates this is the natural and desired effect of Spirit fullness. As debauchery stems from drunkenness, praise flows from Spirit fullness. Paul speaks of psalms (*psalmos*), hymns (*hymnois*) and spiritual songs (*oidais pneumatikais*) – the distinction is unclear but psalms are generally taken to refer to the Old Testament psalms, hymns to those composed by the churches, and songs of the Spirit refer to those unscripted spontaneous Spirit inspired prophetic songs. Lincoln states: 'The songs which believers sing to each other are spiritual because they are inspired by the Spirit and manifest the life of the Spirit.'[8] These songs are to be said or sung to one another (not in monastic antiphony per se), stirring one another to corporate devotion to God. Worship flows from the heart, not just the lips, and flows full of gratitude towards God through Christ (verse 20). In Ephesians 3:14–19 Paul has spoken of being filled with the Spirit which brings a profound revelation of the love and power of Christ. This Spirit-fullness brings revelation, that revelation brings exultation. Those who sing little have supped little of this river and seen little of the Saviour. As I write this, the 2006 Football World Cup is on. Football fans, drunk on beer, fill our streets singing their sporting chants to one another. We have a better song to sing. Filled with the Spirit let us encourage one another, singing to Christ the King.

The Spirit who elicits prayer

As the Spirit opens the word and reveals Christ to us, we are moved to praise him for his goodness and also to petition him for his response to needs as known. The Spirit of worship is the Spirit of prayer. Prayer and worship are inextricably linked. Solomon's temple was a place of worship and prayer. When Solomon had finished building the temple, he petitioned God to hear the prayers of the people offered in this place (2 Chronicles 6). When he finished praying, the glory of God, his manifest presence, filled the place and the people fell on their faces in worship and praise. Solomon's temple rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Herod was used for sacrifice, instruction in God's word, worship and prayer. John's prophetic vision of the heavenly temple also combines prayer and worship (Revelation 5:8) – the four living creatures and twenty-four elders before the throne of God are '. . . each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are

the prayers of the saints'. The Church as the temple of the Spirit corporately (1 Corinthians 3:16f), and the believer as a temple individually (1 Corinthians 6:19), must hold harp and bowl, offering praise and prayer.

- Romans 8:26: 'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.'
- Ephesians 6:18: 'Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.'
- Jude verse 20: 'But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit.'

In these three key texts we see three different aspects to the Spirit of prayer: first, the Spirit praying in us for us; second, the Spirit leading and sustaining us to pray at all times for others; and third, prayer in the Spirit building up the Church.

Romans tells us that the Spirit himself is an intercessor in our hearts, interceding for us through us. In Ephesians 3:18, prayer in the Spirit may be connected with the preceding verse which speaks of the word of God as sword of the Spirit. Here prayer in the Spirit may be according to what God has spoken and revealed in his word, be it Christ, Scripture or the prophetic. This prayer led by the Spirit is persevering prayer and focused not on one's own need but those of the saints. In Jude, prayer in the Spirit refers to Spirit-inspired prayers, and its semantic links (*build up*) equate with glossolalia in 1 Corinthians 14:13–19, suggesting it is charismatic prayer in tongues.[9] Its focus is on building up, edifying, and strengthening the intercessor and believer.

Centring the Spirit in worship

The Church everywhere has always understood the necessity and centrality of the Spirit's role in worship. This has never been disputed. What has been disputed is the where and how of this operation. The distinctive features of each tradition have often been the locus for their emphasis on the Spirit's work. Lesslie Newbigin famously spoke of the three streams in the Church: Catholic, Reformed and Pentecostal.[10] The emphasis on their worship is clearly also the focus for their pneumatology:

Catholic traditions make the Eucharist the central event of worship – through the *epiclesis* (Greek, meaning 'call down') the Spirit is invoked to constitute the bread and wine as a sacramental christological mediation of grace.

Reformed traditions make the preached word the central event of worship – that word, inspired by the Spirit, is anointed when preached and applied to the hearts and minds of the listeners by the Spirit, as a mediator of divine grace.[11]

Pentecostal traditions make the dynamic 'experience' of the Spirit central, through his release, notably through praise, worship, prophecy and healing.

In all three streams, the activity of the Spirit constitutes what is deemed to be *true spiritual worship*, and is focused on a denomination's particular theological *a priori* commitments. The goal in all three is 'immediacy' with God by the Spirit – partaking of his grace.

At the risk of inclusive blandness, I want to affirm that I believe all three streams genuinely reflect genuine operations of the Spirit and are therefore right investments for the Church's corporate worship. In Acts 2:42f, the community of the Spirit-filled are marked in their *sanctorum communio* by, among other things, devotion to 'the Apostles' teaching' (Reformed emphasis), 'breaking bread' (Catholic emphasis), 'awe, signs and wonders' (Pentecostal emphasis). While the members of the early Church devoted themselves to all three clear ministrations of the Spirit, the subsequent Church appears to have divided them up and distributed them out.

The core to Corinth's Spirit-led worship

The church at Corinth is rarely used as a biblical benchmark for worship. For that matter, no New Testament church seems to get worship right: the Galatians tend towards legalism, retreating into observance of Jewish law; the Colossians tend towards Gnosticism, devoted to angels and mysteries; the Corinthians tend towards self-gratification and are divided, elitist, and immoral. Nevertheless, Paul in correcting their worship indicates to us what are the core particulars of worship. In 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, bracketing his discussion on their shared experience of the Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts, he shows us what Spirit-led worship looks like. 1 Corinthians 11:18 states: 'when you assemble as a church . . . ', and continues speaking

of the centrality of Christ's institution of the breaking of bread (the Eucharist, or Holy Communion), and the necessity for unity at the Lord's table. In 1 Corinthians 14:26–29, Paul again says: 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation . . . Let two or three prophets speak and let the others weigh what is said.' Both texts in context refer to 'church' (*ecclesia*), both refer to (*synerchomenon*) 'coming together'. We may rightly, therefore, posit the various core elements Paul expected at a typical church service; a coming together (unity / diversity / body) to celebrate the Lord's Supper (11:20), followed by various members contributing, leading in a song of praise, reading a Scripture, sharing an encouragement, giving a tongue or prophecy. The importance Paul places elsewhere, particularly in his letters to Timothy, on public prayer (1 Timothy 2) and preaching and teaching the word (1 Timothy 4), lead us to include these also as vital elements in corporate worship; while his criteria for Paul's appointing elders, deacons or overseers (1 Timothy 3), indicate some shared leadership (note overseers, deacons, presbyters always in the plural) and oversight of the worship event.

This worship centres on four core features: first, the Spirit leads all members to contribute; second, the word is read and taught; third, the sacrament is shared and savoured; fourth, songs of praise are sung. Here is freedom within order, listening and speaking, giving and receiving, belonging and contributing. What was normative in the New Testament, or at least desired as normative by Paul, is sadly elusive in modern Christian worship. Occasionally one has seen attempts to replicate this, e.g. in early Quakerism, German Pietism, Brethrenism, early Pentecostal and charismatic groupings. Sadly, all too often, a clerical sclerosis sets in. Dynamic Spirit-led spontaneity is replaced by formalised liturgical structure. The priesthood of all believers, with everyone participating, is replaced by the doit-all of the professional, the anointed or appointed leader. The vital combination of sacrament, song, Scripture and signs, with space made for offering and weighing the inspired tongues and prophecies, is divided up with different traditions emphasising one to the loss of the other. One wonders, if today Paul were to attend a modern church across any denomination, whether he would struggle to recognise it as apostolic.

I am not sure how one effects this in practice – especially in a large church setting with the weight of tradition, confession and one's spiritual

forefathers breathing down one's neck. Most churches with some commitment to this model quickly lose its dynamism when the church grows too large. More often they siphon most of these elements to midweek small group or home group meetings, something I don't think Paul envisaged. Perhaps first and most importantly, the church leader must be willing to take a risk and relinquish some control to the Spirit and involvement to the members who are not to be mere passive listeners to a sermon or partakers at the communion rail. Secondly, the leader must inculcate the values in church members and equip and release them to exercise giftings and participate fully. Thirdly, space in the worship event must be given to the core elements of the Lord's Supper, the word, praise and contribution from members. Sadly, most church members are watching the clock. They believe they come to consume not to contribute – what do they pay their minister for if not to 'do it all'? To make room for New Testament worship in Spirit and truth, one would need to make more time available. Here is a glimpse of how it was in the tremendous outpouring of the Spirit in the Welsh revival of 1904:

> Being at a revival meeting meant that each person attending could take part as well. Evan Roberts taught that meetings were to be led by the Spirit. They were to be undirected by people . . . Although Evan recognised that as the revival progressed this sort of openness was liable to be misused – he began to direct and lead to a greater measure as a result – here we see a practical outworking of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It wasn't the minister alone who audibly took part. Worship was congregational activity and all could be involved in prayer, praise and encouragement. The laity were given a voice in the meeting . . .[12]

In an academic paper given at Fuller, Tim Dearborn suggests that this is also the model of worship within the many fresh expressions of the Church:

> The emerging church recognises that it is constituted by God and nourished in worship. Worship is not the prelude to the sermon. It is not an individual spectator activity or performance. Worship is not a human led program. Worship is our participation by the Spirit in the life of the triune God. Worship is an experience of reconciliation. Thus it is inherently a corporate encounter – drawing us to God and to one another.[13]

If this is indeed the case, that emerging churches, rather than being conditioned by modern culture as some fear, are in fact re-presenting a radical biblical culture of worship to modern culture, then this is extremely encouraging and indeed prophetic for the denominations often held captive to their denominationally formulated liturgies and spiritualities.

The Spirit who elicits praise and worship visits prayer and worship

As I noted at the start of this chapter, worship is not one-way traffic – as we give glory to God his glory is poured out on us. Of course God alone is the object of worship, but nevertheless, we are glorified as we give glory. Interestingly, Jesus' very mention to the woman at the well in John 4 of 'true worship' in Spirit and truth, follows immediately on from his promise to her of satisfaction, quenched thirst by the water he would give her, the Holy Spirit. That soul-quenching water enables us to give to God in worship. Indeed, that satisfaction elicits our singing. While worship is a response to that gift, that gift may also come as a response to worship. God inhabits the prayer and praise of his people. The Spirit fell at Pentecost as they were gathered together in one place (Acts 2:1) and what were they doing at that time? Acts 1:14 says they were all together in one place praying and seeking God. In Acts 3:1f, as Peter and John were heading to the temple to offer prayer and worship, God works a miracle through them, healing the cripple at the Beautiful Gate. In Acts 4:31, as they prayed, they were filled with the Spirit. In Acts 10:1f and 9f, it was while Cornelius and Peter were in prayer, that they respectively received a revelation from God.

These last three examples occurred during the 'set hours of prayer', when traditionally the Jew or Proselyte turned towards God, reciting psalms in worship and interceding. In Acts 16:25f, Peter and Silas were in jail but as they prayed and sang praises to God, a miracle occurred; an earthquake shook their prison doors and chains free, and the end result was the conversion of the jailer and his household. Prayer and worship mystically created a platform for the Spirit to come and speak prophetically and move powerfully. In Acts 13 it was as the leaders were fasting, praying and ministering to the Lord in worship, that revelation was received, the Spirit spoke, and Paul and Barnabas were sent out on the start of the most fruitful apostolic mission in the New Testament.

Revelation and the demonstration of the Spirit are shown to flow within corporate worship. Acts 2:42 is clear that in the context of the Church gathered in worship, with the word preached and the breaking of bread, there was a powerful visitation of the Spirit, bringing a sense of 'awe', a term in Scripture always associated with the manifest presence of God, and a demonstration of God's power in signs and wonders. In the context of the Church gathered in worship (1 Corinthians 11, 14), there was an expectation by Paul that God would both 'speak' prophetically in a

revelatory way, and manifest his power (1 Corinthians 12:1–9). John states that the profound revelation he received came when, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day' (Revelation 1:10). This may rightly be understood as idiomatic for 'spiritual worship' on the day set aside for worshipping Christ, the first day of the week, when Christ rose.[14] As John was giving himself in worship, he was filled with the Spirit, and in this spiritual state, he received a personal visitation from Christ and a powerful revelation for the Church and history. While this is unique in terms of its authority for the Church, it is not unique in terms of worship welcoming the Spirit, who opens divine revelation.

At the very least, our response to such texts should be to cause us to want to make space in our times of worship and praise, to be filled with the Spirit and to listen and see if the Lord will say or show anything. Sometimes he does without us expecting! A friend and seminary tutor in theology and worship told my enthralled students of an occurrence when, years earlier, he and his wife had been leading a worship time in a small church in the north of England. Suddenly the worship was interrupted with shouts of amazement and excitement by many. A man was shoved to the microphone and said he'd been healed – again shouts of delight and praise. When my friend asked him how he knew, he replied: 'I was born mute'! Tim Dearborn notes: 'Worship is a dramatic encounter with the power of God, rather than a passive and comforting moment of education and encouragement.'[15] God dwells amidst the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3) – he comes in all his power and love.

Conclusion

God is looking for worshippers who give him the glory he is due. This happens when worship is in Spirit and truth – by the Spirit through the revealed truth of Christ. The Spirit of God fashions and focuses Christians to worship and offer God, through our lives and our lips, sacrifice and service (Romans 12:1f), praise and prayer. Worship is not determined or restrained by space or location. Worship is to be offered by us as individual temples of the Spirit, and corporately as we gather with the Church as Spirit Temple. Worship restores us to our full redeemed humanity; worship welcomes us into the communion of God, crowning us with glory even as we glorify our glorious God. As Judson Cornwall writes:

We can expect God to provide everything necessary to make worship possible. We children of God must ever be dependent upon God, for we have no resources of our own. We are as impoverished in worship times as a baby unable to provide its own bottle at feeding time. God, the object of our worship, also becomes the inspiration of that worship. He has imparted His own Spirit into our hearts to energize that worship. All that is due Him comes from Him. His glorious Person evokes admiration for and honor of Him, as He imparts His nature into me.[16]

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1 Morris, *Spirit of the Living God*, p. 59.

2 *Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 250.

3 Church of England, *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662.

4 Barrett, *Gospel According to St John*, p. 239.

5 *Spirit of Christ*.

6 Morris, *Spirit of the Living God*, p. 59.

7 Packer, 'Puritan Approach to Worship', Grace Online website.

8 *Ephesians*, p. 346.

9 Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 113.

10 *Household of God*.

11 Luther and Calvin also had much to say about the place of the Eucharist in worship.

12 Adams, *A Diary of Revival*, p. 127.

13 Dearborn, 'Emerging Church – the Old Church Made New'.

14 Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, p. 76.

15 Dearborn, 'Emerging Church – the Old Church Made New'.

16 *Worship As Jesus Taught It*, p. 140.

17

THE SPIRIT AND WORLD MISSION

> Acts 1:8: 'And you will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost ends of the earth.'

Introduction – the missionary God

God is a missionary God. Exocentric, outgoing, like the tide which reaches and returns, God is always extending beyond himself to draw us into himself. The act of creation was a divine compulsion to create a place within space which he might populate with numerous races with whom he might have an eternal intimate relationship. The whole scriptural revelation is of mission, God creating then ever seeking to restore a rebellious people to himself. The Bible's laws, lands, sacrifices, temples, prophets, priests, Messiah, Church, kingdom – all are only understood within the framework of the missionary God (in Latin *mittere*, meaning 'send'). Within the scriptural schema, *God sends his Son*, *the Father and Son send the Spirit*, *the Spirit sends the Church. The Spirit is God Inside Out – externalising and evangelising*. God sends out his Spirit to draw in his people; as John R. Mott, the great missionary statesman once said: 'The Holy Spirit is the great missioner.'[1]

Through his substitutionary death and resurrection, Jesus Christ opened up the way for fallen-away man to fall back into God's open loving arms. God has given us the privilege of partnering with him in delivering this invitation. And so Christ commissions his disciples to extend this offer, to proclaim the Good News. The Church has been called out of darkness into Christ's marvellous light to declare God's mighty deeds (1 Peter 2:9). Each generation receives this baton and is responsible for handing on the invitation. But the exigencies of life, the rejections of man, the weakness of

the flesh, the opposition of an enemy militate against this. Only with God's empowering presence, his evangelising Spirit, can we present God's loving message.

A great commission, a great companion

In John 20:21f, the resurrected Jesus met the disciples and said: 'As the Father sent me, even so I send you.' Then he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' The Spirit who empowered Christ for his witness is sent through Christ to enable the Church to witness to Christ. Almost certainly this is John's account of the 'Great Commission', which is presented by Matthew (28:18–20) and Luke (24:46–49) coupled with (Acts 1:8). Mark also records a commission in 16:14– 19, but most scholars agree this is a later addition, albeit an accurate summation. Though there are some differences, the four Evangelists broadly agree on:

- The *mandate* – Christ sends his disciples out.
- The *means* – Christ accompanies ('by the Spirit' in Luke, Acts and John, and through Christ 'being always with you' in Matthew).
- The *message* – 'forgiveness of sins' is offered (stated by John and Luke, and inferred in Matthew's baptism).
- The *map* to the 'nations' (stated by Luke, Acts and Matthew, and inferred in John's double repetition of forgiveness for 'everyone').

The book of Acts details the Church's mission partnership with the Spirit as she seeks to fulfil Christ's commission. Despite receiving this, the disciples are often slow to understand it and at times slow to obey it. Moments before Christ's ascension the disciples say, in Acts 1:6: 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' They still haven't understood. They are thinking in nationalistic, political terms – wanting to see Christ re-establishing the Davidic kingdom, overthrowing Israel's occupying Roman enemies and no doubt seeing themselves as sharing in some of Christ's ruling power and honour. Like those disciples, how quick the Church can be to misunderstand the nature of Christ's kingdom and her commission – replacing what is essentially spiritual with what is political. Is this not the same spirit behind the centuries of political machinations by the Church of Rome building a Christendom on Constantinian foundations, adopting more the spirit of the Roman Empire than the kingdom of Heaven?[2] Is this the

spirit of Anglicanism wedded to crown and government, whose pragmatic gains in no way outweigh the losses and compromises? Is this perhaps the spirit of the Crusades which thought the land of Israel worth the loss of so many lives in bloody conflict? Is this perhaps the spirit of Christian Zionism, more concerned with reinstating Israel as a nation than with reaching the nations with the gospel? Restoring the kingdom of Israel is to be expected (Acts 1:6), it will happen, in fact God the Father has set the date (1:7), but it will not take place until the gospel has reached the nations (1:8). The disciples are not to concern themselves with such matters, but rather with taking Christ to the nations. Their roads, their lives are to lead *out from* Jerusalem *to the world*, not vice versa. The task is not to establish a national or political realm in Israel, but to establish a spiritual people through the world by the Spirit's empowering witness to Christ, and disciple-making (Matthew 28:18f).

Acts 1:8: 'And you will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost ends of the earth.' This promise of power to witness through their reception of the Spirit is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. God does not expect us to serve and speak for him without his help. The mandate and the means come together. On that day (Acts 2:1f), the shy, fearful, formerly disloyal disciples are deluged with divine power. Filled with the Spirit they spill onto the streets, publicly, exuberantly preaching Christ. Enveloped by these tongues of fire, their tongues are set on fire and they boldly and publicly declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:5f). Boer in his weighty study on *Pentecost and Missions* says: 'Being filled with the Spirit at Pentecost manifested itself in irrepressible speaking about the great works of God.'[3] This Spirit-inspired utterance not only points to Christ as Lord, but also to Christ for the world. Speaking in tongues was not so much an ecstatic enjoyment of God, but rather a prophetic event, announcing that the Spirit sent by Christ the Lord and Saviour, is for the world.

To a bemused crowd, Peter stands and speaks (Acts 2:14). Peter who betrayed Christ thrice, now fearlessly proclaims Christ as Lord and Saviour. Three thousand hear, believe and trust in Christ, and are added to the Church (Acts 2:41). This Holy Spirit gives both boldness to witness and effectiveness in their witness. The Holy Spirit is convicting the listeners of sin, convincing them of Christ, and compelling them to repentance and faith.

Let us not miss the perspective here on the *nations*. Hearing the disciples proclaiming God in their own language is a prophetic symbol of God's heart for the nations. Yahweh was never a parochial, national divine. He made the world, loved the world and in Christ redeemed the world. The empowering Spirit will enable a small, rag-tag group from a conquered nation, in a lowly backwater of the Empire, to impact the whole world. How ironic that what the Greek and Roman Empires sought to do militarily but failed, the Church would do and succeed. Her initial successes were even aided in part by the universal Koine language left by the Greeks and the excellent and safe travel and trade routes established by the Roman Empire and her *Pax Romana*.

Acts 1:8 – advance aflame

The book of Acts broadly follows the Acts 1:8 schema with the gospel preached in the Spirit's power in Jerusalem, Samaria and to the uttermost ends of the earth, represented by the book finishing with Paul preaching in Rome.

Jerusalem

In Acts 2 to 8 we see the Apostles continuing to preach the gospel and to draw many to the Church and the cause of Christ. In Acts 6 we meet Stephen, a man filled with the Spirit (6:5), who performs miracles and wonders by the Spirit (6:8), emboldened with wisdom and power to witness for Christ. Stephen is an example of ultimate witness (from the Greek *martyrion*, meaning 'witness'), who by the Spirit is enabled to faithfully lay down his life for Christ as the first martyr (Acts 7). If we want the Spirit of God to witness, we must understand that witness means more than preaching with words, but also with lives laid down!

Judea

Following the dispersal of the Jews in the persecution diaspora, we are told (8:1, 4) that many went through Judea preaching the gospel. One wonders whether they would have done so were it not for the persecution, perhaps preferring to stay in the giddy excitement of revival in Jerusalem. The persecution gives the necessary impetus to take the gospel to Judea, according to the prophetic mandate of Christ in Acts 1:8.

Samaria

Philip, like Stephen, was chosen as a deacon because he was a man filled with the Spirit and faith Acts 6:3. Through the dispersal of disciples following the martyrdom of Stephen, he went to Samaria and there preached Christ and performed many miracles. Revival ensued. He was led by God to go down to the Gaza Road and there encountered the Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot, reading prophetic Scripture about Christ the suffering servant. Philip was instructed by the Spirit to go to him (Acts 8:29) and eventually led him to faith in Christ. After baptising him, the Spirit caught Philip up and took him off to Azotos, where he preached the gospel (8:39f). In both Stephen and Philip's lives, the Holy Spirit was clearly the initiating, directing, empowering presence who testified through them in word, deed and even death to Christ.

The Gentiles

In Acts 10 Peter is directed through a vision to meet with the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household, who have been prepared for the gospel through an angelic visitation. Without specific revelation and instruction, the religiously scrupulous Peter would never have gone into a Gentile's home with the gospel. On reporting back to the elders in Jerusalem, Peter specifically says that the Holy Spirit has spoken to him and told him he must go to Cornelius (11:12). *The Church in Jerusalem did not authorise or even initiate this mission to the Gentiles*, *it took place through the sovereign direction of the Spirit* sending and speaking through Peter, then coming upon and saving Cornelius' household. After the fact, the Jerusalem church accept it as being a work of God – what else could they do? C. K. Barrett says, 'The only legitimizer is the Spirit not the Jerusalem Church.'[4]

To the uttermost ends

In Acts 13:2, as the Antioch leadership are fasting and worshipping, the Holy Spirit speaks through one of the prophets instructing that Paul and Barnabas be set apart for the work which he has called them. The church obeys and sends them out (verse 3) but Luke then states: 'being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia' (verse 4). The church's sending is merely a complying with the will and work of the Spirit who sends. The Spirit initiates the mission. Paul and Barnabas go off and their

strategy is to visit the large towns and cities along the coastal and trade routes where there is a large population of people, and wherever they go they witness to Christ. Their mission method is pragmatic, but in Acts 16:6–10 we have clear direction given by the Spirit. The *Spirit forbade them* to visit Asia and Bithynia, then sends a vision and directs them to go to Macedonia. Paul is empowered by the Spirit to be a witness to Christ (Acts 9:15f); this Spirit initiates Paul's mission (Acts 13:2), and directs the where and when of it (Acts 16:6). David Bosch summarises these narratives in Acts: 'the emphasis is on the Holy Spirit as catalyst, guide and inspirer towards mission'.[5]

The tongue-speaking and preaching on the day of Pentecost, the ministry of Stephen, Philip, Peter, Paul and Barnabas all confirm the promise and provision of Acts 1:8, that the Spirit will anoint witness to Christ. The Spirit of Pentecost, the Spirit of missions prepares the way (the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius), pushes out the Apostles (Philip and Peter), anoints the preaching and brings people to faith.

An unfinished task

Statistics are somewhat unreliable. But there is a general agreement that approximately ten thousand specific ethnic people or groups representing in excess of two billion people (39.2 per cent of the world's population) are unreached or unaffected by the gospel of Christ and have no effective active indigenous Church witness.[6] However, looking on the bright side, 60 per cent of the world have been effectively evangelised and there exist some two billion believers in Christ. For two millennia the Church has been advancing and people have been entering Christ's kingdom. This growth has not been even – the Church has spluttered, stopped and started in her witness. History records a remarkable advance of the Church through her witness in the first hundred years and a remarkable advance in the last hundred years. The intervening 1,800 years saw a somewhat piecemeal mission endeavour, with a few notable personalities and missionary movements but by no means a sustained, corporate, passionate missionary witness. Whenever the Spirit of God has been honoured and partnered, mission has occurred. When the Spirit is sidelined, sadly, so is mission.

What God has joined let no man put asunder

The Holy Spirit wedded the believers into a community – the Church (Acts 2:41, 42) but also inspired them in their kerygmatic communication. Sadly the Church has put more effort into community than communication. That community, the Church, exists to communicate Christ. As Pope Paul VI wrote in his encyclical on mission 1965: 'The Pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit that she draws her origin.'[7] When her focus turns inward, then she forgets her vocation and loses connection with her divine destiny. Tragically, by the third century, the Church which had covered much of the Empire in a hundred years, turned her attention mainly to Church order, doctrine and structure. Bosch notes that by the second century, the focus on the work of the Spirit was not the distinctive of Luke or Acts – the unity of the Spirit and mission – but a move to the Spirit as sanctifier and guarantor of apostolicity.[8] Throughout subsequent generations, the linking of the Spirit with missions is too often absent from Church records and theology. Even at the Reformation, with the rediscovery of the doctrine of the Spirit whose major work is revelation of Christ with and through the word, there was a failure to connect this word-work of conviction, instruction and revelation of Christ, with missions and evangelism.

Historically, many of the movements which emphasised the Spirit were led into an internalised spirituality rather than dynamic mission. This might be said in general of Quakerism, Puritanism and Pietism – holiness movements which sadly did not become gospel mission movements. Pinnock rightly chides: 'God did not pour his Spirit out for us to exult in it as a private benefit.'[9] Similarly, Barth is keen to remind us that the Spirit always directs attention to Christ:

> . . . those who accept the witness of the Holy Spirit cannot tarry with him as such. There can be no abstract receiving and possessing of the Holy Spirit. There can be no self moved and self resting life in the Spirit, no self sufficient spiritual status. The witness of the Holy Spirit does not have itself either as its origin or goal.[10]

This warning has not always been heard and heeded by the twentieth-century charismatic movement, who at times seemed more concerned with 'speaking in tongues' than preaching the gospel to nations of other tongues. Ministry, celebration, inner healing, phenomena, charisms, ecstasies, hearing the voice of God etc., serve no purpose if the end result is not a greater love for Christ and a greater desire to make him known. While not

quick to judge, we must test all such claims, experiences and movements by looking for the fruit of changed lives and passionate gospel witness.

The sent Spirit sending the Church

There have been exceptions. It can be clearly shown that the waves of spiritual renewal that swept Britain and the US in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted not only in many converts and new churches, but also in a passion for missions with the founding of several notable ones still surviving (the Church Mission Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the China Inland Mission). In eighteenth-century Germany, the Moravian pietist gathering experienced the power of the Spirit dramatically falling in a communion meeting. Non-stop prayer meetings began and within twenty-five years, this little community sent out over two hundred missionaries to places such as Greenland, Africa and the East Indies. The two eighteenth-century evangelical awakenings in the UK and US resulted in missionary fervour through such men as Wesley, Whitfield, Edwards, Brainerd, Asbury and Adoniram Johnson. The two waves of renewal in mid and late nineteenth-century Britain and America, fuelled by the ministry of men like Moody and the Keswick movement, resulted in a passion for missions activity with the inspirational Cambridge Seven among them. Writing in 1913, W. H. Griffith Thomas could observe that, 'worldwide evangelisation may be said to have sprung largely from these revival movements'.[11] That was before the notable twentieth-century impact of the so-called Pentecostals – wherein lies the hope of the Church and of the world. This movement, which rediscovered the power of the Spirit's baptism in fire has grown in the hundred years between 1906 and 2006 from zero to five hundred million! The growth is unprecedented in Church history and continues exponentially. Far from it emphasising, as some critics wrongly suggest, personal enjoyment of charisms, this is a movement which has rediscovered and released the power of the Spirit outward to the world. Roswell Flower, one of the early pioneers of Pentecostalism, wrote of the need to receive the Spirit's empowering:

> then and only then are we fit to carry the gospel. When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the 'missionary spirit' comes with it. They are inseparable as the Missionary spirit is but one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.[12]

In their 1989 constitution, the largest Pentecostal denomination AOG-USA stated: 'The priority for reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God is to be an agency for evangelizing the world.'[13] Pentecostalism and evangelisation are synonymous. The rediscovery of New Testament church norms of energising and vitalising Spirit power equipping all believers to speak and serve Christ, in word, signs and wonders *is* Pentecostalism. Thank God for her. What she has the rest of the Church needs, that the rest of the Church can reach a world in need.

Though many are slow to see this, the Roman Catholic Church has observed and made the right deduction. In their Malines Document 1974, published notably as, 'Towards a new Pentecost for a new Evangelisation', the Catholic scholars, having analysed charismatic renewal, concluded:

> A major strength of the renewal is in the area of evangelisation. The re-establishment of a personal relationship to Jesus through the experience of the power of the Spirit has made those in the renewal aware of that power as the basis for proclaiming the gospel, arousing faith in others and prompting faith to unfold and grow.[14]

Conclusion – don't internalise the externalising evangelising Spirit

In preparing this chapter, I consulted numerous books on both the Spirit and mission. Perhaps one in a dozen made mention of the inseparable link between mission and the Spirit, and then often just a token nod. Reams are written on the exact nature of the relationship between the Spirit and the Father and Son: the extent to which the Spirit is abroad in the creation, how he inspired Scripture, how he gifts the believer, how he is experienced in regeneration or sanctification. But next to nothing on the Spirit as missioner, the Spirit as evangelist. I should not have been surprised. We have noted how the Church in history internalises the working of the Spirit of God who was given to externalise and evangelise. The one sent to send has all too often been trapped, accommodated in our preferential systems, disobeyed and grieved. The Church has focused on her officers and offices, orders and ordinations. But when it comes to mission, never has so much been left by so many to so few. We have failed, claiming we lack the funds, the faith, the supporters, the opportunities, the resources. But the lack has been the Spirit's power. Not that he lacks power, but we have failed to avail ourselves of what is readily available.

The distinguished evangelist and theologian, Michael Green, says that, 'the primary purpose the Spirit is given is for mission'.[15] I agree to the

extent that we understand mission as more than just the *proclamation* of the gospel by the Church in the world, a core to mission though it is, but the co-joining with God to bring about the transformation of fallen humankind in his fallen world through the cross of Christ. The mission of the Church is to partner with the missionary Spirit in conveying his divine offer of transformation – God outside to bring the world inside.

The Spirit's whole role is missionary. God inside out to bring those outside in. The Spirit sustains and beautifies creation. He co-joined the eternal Son with flesh and blood in Mary's womb; he anointed this Jesus as Christ; he offered him as an eternal sacrifice to the Father; he raised him from the dead. This sent Spirit alighted on the Church at Pentecost; he convicts humankind of sin, righteousness and judgement. He regenerates the believer, adopts heirs, sanctifies and satisfies lives. The Spirit inspired Holy Scripture, he appoints officers and ministries in the Church, he facilitates worship, he empowers the proclamation and the reception of the gospel. The sent-out Spirit sends out the Church to gather in the wretched, poor, blind, thirsty, hungry, naked and lost – that they might be beautified and glorified in the renewing holy love of God revealed on Golgotha's bloody mount.

May we live in a generation when every Christian is filled with the Spirit, as at Pentecost, inspired to make Christ known.

Colossians 1:28f: 'Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he powerfully inspires within me.'

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1 In Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, p. 60.

2 Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, Chapter 1.

3 *Pentecost and Missions*, p. 101.

4 *Acts 1–14*, p. 601.

5 *Transforming Mission*, p. 114.

6 Joshua Project website.

7 'Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church' (1965), Christus Rex et Redemptor Mundi website.

8 *Transforming Mission*, p. 115.

9 *Flame of Love*, p. 141.

10 *Church Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 130.

11 *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 112.

12 Dyer and Kay, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies: A Reader*, p. 93.

13 Burgess, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 877.

14 McDonnell, *Towards a New Pentecost for a New Evangelisation*.

15 *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, pp. 58f.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

doptionism The belief that Jesus was a human, who at his baptism received an extraordinary anointing of the Spirit and was adopted, elevated in status at that moment, to divine sonship.

rianism A fourth-century heresy following Arius which saw the pre-incarnate Jesus as divine but created.

rminianism A theological system which arose in response to Calvinism, led by Jacobus Arminius, which emphasised the choice of the individual in response to God's grace.

sceticism From the Greek word for training or exercise, the word has come to have associations with purifying oneself through the renunciation of worldly things.

alvinism A belief system taking its roots in the writings of Calvin, which lays a particular stress on God's sovereignty in all matters, particularly pertaining to salvation.

essationalism / Cessationism The belief that the charismatic gifts of the spirit have passed away.

harismata Gifts of grace – generally used more specifically to refer to those mentioned in the Pauline lists, e.g. 1 Corinthians 12.

hristology That which has to do with the Person and Work of Christ.

ommon Grace The grace of God which is given to all humanity irrespective of their salvic status.

eism The belief in a God who somehow set the universe in motion but subsequently remains distant.

ispensationalism A way of reading salvation history in which time is divided up into different periods or 'dispensations', in which God relates differently to man.

ocetism The belief that Jesus only appeared to be human, as God could never actually assume a human nature.

oxology From the Greek words *doxa* and *logos* (meaning 'glory' and 'word') – speaking praise.

cclesiology From the Greek word *ekklesia* (which has to do with calling out) – doctrine of the Church.

menationism A worldview in which reality is constituted of a number of progressively lower layers all flowing from and derived from a single source.

piclesis Literally 'Called down' – used of prayers invoking the Spirit.

schatology The study of the end and the fulfilment of God's purposes on earth (for the Christian the eschatological age began to break in with Jesus).

nosticism A belief popular in the first century, Gnosticism holds that the world is evil, distant from God and must be escaped through attaining special types of knowledge.

ypostasis A term used to convey some idea of distinction or individuation.

nmanence The Latin root means 'to remain within', and the word is usually used in contrast to transcendence to speak of God's involvement with or nearness to creation.

vingitism A nineteenth-century movement based on the teachings of Edward Irving with an emphasis on spiritual warfare, charismatic gifts and the imminent return of Christ.

nsenism A seventeenth-century Catholic movement (in some ways similar to Calvinism), whose followers believed (after Jansen) that humans were born incapable of doing good apart from a divine work of grace.

lodalism The belief that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three different manifestations of one individual rather than three distinct persons.

lonergism The belief that God alone accomplishes salvation without the necessity for any human co-operation.

lonism The belief that all is one.

lontanism A second-century sect, named after its founder, Montanus, notable for the high authority it gave to contemporary prophecy.

ntological That which is to do with being or existence.

pus Operantis Latin, meaning 'our working out of God's work in us'.

pus Operatum Latin, meaning 'God's work done in us'.

usia Essence or substance.

anentheism The belief that God permeates all things.

anmetatheism God with all – God is deeply involved with his creation but is not a part of it.

antheism A belief which sees God as synonymous with all that exists.

araclete Literally 'called alongside' – a term used by Jesus to denote the Holy Spirit and in part describe his work.

ietism A seventeenth-century Protestant movement which emphasised sanctification, both inward and in terms of practical deeds.

latonism The philosophy of Plato which claimed that all the phenomena of the world are mere imperfect passing reflections of the divine eternal actual ideal forms.

neumatology That which has to do with the Person and Work of the Spirit.

re-millennial From Revelation 20, the belief in a future literal one thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

revenient Grace A doctrine which asserts that the Holy Spirit 'goes before' the gospel ministry, readying individual hearts to hear and respond.

ropitiation In Christian theology, the work of Christ on the cross by which God's wrathful judgement against the sinner is turned away and satisfied.

uietism A belief originating in the seventeenth century which sought perfection through a state of stillness and quiet.

eformed Generally concerning the doctrines associated with the Protestant Reformation in general, and Calvinist views in particular.

egeneration An initial work of the Spirit bringing the believer to new life in Christ.

abellianism See *Modalism*.

anctification The process by which a believer becomes holy.

oteriology That which has to do with salvation.

ubordinationism The belief that there is some form of hierarchy within the Trinity, with the Son and Spirit being subordinate to the Father.

ynergism The belief that the sinner somehow co-operates with God in accomplishing or finishing the work of salvation.

ynoptic A term applied to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which differ stylistically from John's more theological Gospel – the synoptic Gospels attempt a synopsis or summary outline of the ministry and teaching of Christ.

eleology That which is to do with ultimate purpose and goals.

heosis An orthodox doctrine to do with the believer becoming like God.

risagion An ancient orthodox prayer which was trinitarian in structure.

Vorks Righteousness A Reformed term describing an understanding of the Catholic notion that righteousness is based on good works.